

## CHAPTER 1: The "Vanishing Place"

"Look at that plane! That fellow's crazy! Took off with the wind behind him! He'll nose dive before he clears the clubhouse! He'll crash into those trees along the edge of the golf course!"

The group on the field at Westbury, Long Island, held their breaths as they watched James Dent take off in the wildest, most erratic flight that they had ever seen. Under lowering storm clouds, with the wind roaring half a hurricane behind him, Dent spiraled upward as if unconscious of the laws of Earthly gravity.

"I told you so! You ought to have stopped him, even if it is his private plane! A feller's got no business trying to break his neck! Look there! He's cleared those trees after all!"

James Dent had cleared them, and the clubhouse too, and was already disappearing across the Hempstead Plains, looking like a leaf whirling up in a winter

storm. At a height of five hundred feet he sped eastward.

"Didn't tell you where he was going?"

"Nope, acted like a crazy man. Something on his mind sure. Wherever he's bound for, he'll never get there!"

ut James Dent was already out of sight, and the little group dispersed. And Dent, winging his way due east, over the oak barrens of central Long Island, was conscious neither of the storm that howled about him nor of the excitement that his rash take-off had occasioned.

The rain lashed him in the open cockpit, the ground fog swirled about him, and, though it was still afternoon, there brooded a somber twilight over the wastes. But in his mind Dent was already anticipating his descent at the "Vanishing Place," as the natives called it near Peconic Bay.

The "Vanishing Place" was so called because of the terrible and inexplicable catastrophe that had

occurred there five years previously. In the two-century-old farmhouse, Miles Parrish, the world's greatest authority on physical chemistry, had been conducting investigations into the structure of the atom.

James Dent and Lucius Tode had been associated with old Parrish in this work, which, carried to a successful issue, would revolutionize the social organization of the world. The energy locked up in the atom is so stupendous that, as Eddington indicated, a thimbleful of coal, disintegrated, would carry the *Mauretania* from England to America and back again. To unlock this energy would be to set man free from bondage, to restore the pristine leisure and happiness of Eden.

And because the three men were playing with deadly forces, of incalculable power, this deserted spot had been selected for the carrying on of the investigations. The old farmhouse had been converted into a laboratory. For days together the three had bent over their tubes and laboratory apparatus, hardly eating or sleeping. And the day had come when success had seemed almost within their grasp.

Dent had received six months' leave of absence from his duties at Columbia University in order to prosecute the experiments. As the weeks went by, and the blind track that the three were following opened into a clear road, a sort of madness settled upon every one of them.

The Planck-Bohr quantum theory that the energy of a body cannot vary continuously, but only by a certain finite amount, or exact multiples of this amount, had been the key that unlocked the door. But always it had been Lucius Tode who led the way. Tode was a graduate of the University of Virginia, and accounted one of the most brilliant minds of his generation. At thirty, he stood head and shoulders above his contemporaries.

Dark, handsome, fearless, with a will power that nothing seemed able to subdue, he had taken the leadership away from old Miles Parrish, who eagerly and without thought of his own reputation followed in his assistant's footsteps.

There were the three men—and there was the girl,

Lucille Parrish, the child of Miles's old age.

Seventeen, when the catastrophe occurred, she had come out to the deserted spot sometimes of a Sunday from her boarding school at Garden City.

And Tode had found time to make love to her when he rushed her back to her school in his high-powered foreign car!

Jim Dent had known nothing of that until after the catastrophe. Lucille had been afraid of him, afraid to open her mouth upon the subject even to her father. And she had been fascinated too, as a young girl may well be, when a fascinating man of thirty uses his arts to win her.

It was only by chance that Jim had failed to be involved in the hideous catastrophe that had stamped the old farmhouse with the name of "Vanishing Place" whenever the natives spoke of it.

"Two Killed in Laboratory Explosion!" was the heading in the next morning's paper which gave Jim his first intimation of the accident. He had been to

Columbia overnight to look up a new publication that contained an article on the hydrogen spectrum.

It was only a long paragraph, and the names of Parrish and Tode meant nothing to the man who had written it. But Jim had taken train to Hempstead, taxied to the flying fields, and essayed his first plane ride to Peconic Bay, in the charge of a pilot.

A group of natives, three newspaper men and a Suffolk County policeman were near the spot where the farmhouse had been—near the spot, not on it.

For where the farmhouse had been was a great pool of stagnant water, black as ink, covering an expanse of perhaps three-quarters of an acre.

"No, sir, there was no explosion," said the officer. "At least, none of these fellows heard anything. Just a—you tell the Professor, Mr. Lumm."

"It was about half-past eight last night, Mr. Dent," said Andrew Lumm, who kept the village store a mile away. "Ground seemed to rock. Earthquake, I says to

myself, holdin' on to the door. But it wasn't no earthquake. Too gentle for that. Nothin' broke, not even a plate. Then I says to Mrs. Lumm, 'They're gone, poor fellers, and I allus knowed it would be that way. It's lucky young Mr. Dent went out last night on the 7.15.'

"We hurried here, but there wasn't no sign of the place, jest a hole on the ground with a sort of sticky mud in it. Water's been fillin' in since then, but I guess it's reached its level now. They jest blowed themselves to bits, Mr. Dent."

"Tell him about the vi'let light, Andy," put in one of the bystanders.

"Yeah, like a pillar of vi'let fire that were, Mr. Dent. We seed it through the trees, but by the time we got here it was 'most gone. Gosh, that throwed a scare into some of us!"

"It was Mr. Tode's soul a-burnin'," squeaked Granpop Dawes. "I allus said that feller'd come to no good end."

The group shook their heads and remained silent. It was clear that, if they did not share Granpop Dawes's opinion, at least they considered it not without the bounds of plausibility. Lucius Tode had created a bad impression among the natives.

Jim Dent stooped and picked up something lying imbedded in the mud at the edge of the black pool, and slipped it into his pocket. He had been present at the inquest and had gone back to Columbia. That had been five years before.

Professor McDowd, the palaeontologist, had identified the object Jim had found as the milk molar of *merychippus insignis*, the miocene representative of the modern horse. And that had made Jim Dent think furiously.

The catastrophe must have been a gigantic one to have flung up that fossil tooth from strata far beneath the level of the earth's surface. More, there were even traces of archæan deposits around the borders of the pool, whose depth, in the center, was ascertained to be 164 feet.



Black, silent, uninhabited, unstirred save by a passing breeze, the pool had remained those five years past. The spot was shunned as haunted or accursed by the superstitious country folks. Dense underbrush had grown up around it.

Periodically, Jim had gone out to visit it. That was how he had come to invest in a private plane. It was only an hour to the flying-fields, and less than an hour from there to Peconic Bay. What he expected to achieve he did not know. In the back of his mind was the belief that some day he would light upon some clue that would tell something of the unusual catastrophe.

And then that afternoon he had been shaken to the depths when a message came to him in Lucille's voice over the telephone:

"I've heard from dad!"

Winging his way eastward through the storm, Jim Dent was mentally reconstructing all that had led up to the present moment.

Lucille had finished her high school course and gone into business life. Jim had found a position for her as secretary to a small group of physicists, who were conducting private investigations, a position for which her training well fitted her. She had done well. He had kept in touch with her.

Six months before, their relations had altered. They had realized that they were in love with each other. In the months that followed they had discovered all sorts of things about each other that neither had suspected, which might be summed up by saying that they had become all in all to each other.

It was so amazing, this transformation of ordinary friendship into radiant love, that they were still bewildered over it. They were to be married at the end of the year.

It was then that Lucille had first told Jim about Lucius's wooing, and her fear of the man. Apart from that, both had refrained, by tacit agreement, from making reference to the past.

And then, that afternoon, there sounded Lucille's voice over the telephone, "I've heard from dad!"

"From—your father? You're mistaken, dear!"

"No, Jim, I'm not mistaken. He called me on the 'phone two hours ago. I couldn't mistake his voice, and, besides, he called me "Lucy," like he used to do. He told me to come at once to the Vanishing Place, but not to tell a soul unless I wished to do him a great evil. Then he rang off."

"Where are you now?" asked Jim.

"I'm 'phoning from Amityville. I took the train immediately, but I was so frightened, and—and at last I decide I must tell you. I didn't think dad would have minded my telling you. So I got out. There's another train in a few minutes, and I shall go on to Hampton Bays and walk the two miles to the Vanishing Place. I—I'll meet you there."

"Lucille, wait! Can't you meet me somewhere else, and we'll go on together. I'll get my plane and—"

"Oh, I just can't wait, Jim! I'm in such terror that I won't find dad when I get there. And he told me to tell nobody. I—I'll meet you at the Vanishing Place, Jim."

And so great had been her agitation that with that arrangement Jim had had to rest content. He had taken a taxi out to the flying fields at once.

In half an hour he would know what had happened. And he was obsessed by the terror that he would not find Lucille or anything except the lonely pool.

That was why he opened the throttle and drove on wildly through the scurrying wraiths of mist, pierced by the tops of trees that at times rose dangerously near the spreading wings.

That gap in the trees was Lake Ronkokoma. Not far now! Jim would know soon. But as he flew, vague fears that had beset his mind since he had received Lucille's message began to crystallize into the single fear of Tode. If Parrish was really alive—why not Tode too?

Beneath the polish and the surface comradeship, Jim had always been conscious of some *diablerie* about the man, of some inner life of which he knew nothing. Something unscrupulous and relentless, something infinitely cruel—as when he had tested the Atom Smasher on a stray cur that had run into the laboratory, not for experimentation, but in mere ruthless savagery, converting the living beast instantly into a shapeless mass of flesh and bone.

And Tode had known more about the Atom Smasher—as they affectionately called the mechanism for releasing atomic energy—than old Parrish and he together. Suppose Lucille's story were true! Suppose old Parrish were actually alive, suppose Tode were responsible for some designed scheme which would, in the end place Lucille in his power!

Wild thoughts and fears—but Jim would soon know. And with throttle stretched to the limit he went roaring over the scrub oak toward Peconic Bay.

It was beginning to grow dark, almost too dark for landing. But now Jim could feel the tang of the salt

wind upon his face. He slowed down. The fog was as thick as ever, but the scrub oak had given place to more open country. In a minute or two he ought to sight some landmark. Yes, he had overshot his mark, for suddenly, through a gap in the mists, he saw the line of breakers forming a white ridge upon the sand.

A mile southward! Jim knew where he was now, for he knew every curve of that shore. He banked and turned. And then he saw something that for an instant chilled his blood.

Not far away, and not far beneath him, a ghostly violet haze was spreading through the fog, and the fog itself was coiling back from it until it formed a dense white wall.

For a moment Jim's hand was paralysed upon the stick. The next, his decision was made. He closed his throttle and went down in a slow descent right toward the heart of that column of lavender smoke that seemed to be springing straight up out of the ground. "A pillar of violet fire!" It could not have been described better.

The plane dived through the dense wall of fog, which for a moment shut out the violet fire completely. Then Jim was through, and almost immediately beneath him lay the black and glassy surface of the pool. Out of the very heart of it rose the fire, burning like some infernal flame that consumed nothing, and between it and the fog was a space of almost translucent air, extending to the borders of the pool.

Jim began to circle the pool to find a landing-place. But as he looked down, the surface of the pool began to change its aspect.

In place of the unruffled calm, it began to work with some devil's yeast all around the central pillar of flame, until its depths seemed to be churned up in frothy masses and the movement extended almost to the circumference. Then the whole surface of the water began to tilt and sway with a slow, shimmering, undulatory movement, as if it was a giant roulette wheel in rotation.

And something was materializing out of the heart of the violet flame itself.

It was a face—a human face, with bestial features, distorted and enormously magnified through the substance in which it was. Such a face as might look back upon an observer out of one of those distorting mirrors at Coney Island, or some other place of popular amusement, but twisted and enlarged beyond conception, so that it covered half the area of a city block.

Curiously blurred, too, as if each atom of that face was in isolated motion on its own account. And beneath the face appeared the vague outlines of a hand, apparently manipulating some sort of infernal mechanism.

And that face, enlarged as it was out of all proportion, filled Jim's heart with greater horror than any face he had ever known.

For it was the visage of Lucius Tode, and on those huge and distorted features was something that looked like a diabolical smile.

Everything vanished. Jim was back in the surrounding



wall of fog. Instinctively he banked again. He strove to drive the horror from his brain. He must circle, circle incessantly, in the hope of finding Lucille. She must have already arrived. But if she had not fallen into Tode's power, she would hear the roaring of the plane and manage to signal him.

He circled back into the clear space between the white and the violet, and now he saw that the effect upon the pool was still more pronounced. The waters were rising up in a rim all around, and yet not overflowing. They were standing up like a bowl of clay upon the potter's wheel, and down in the depths Jim could see the head and shoulders of Tode, much less magnified, more natural in appearance, and less blurred. And Tode was looking up at him and pointing that infernal mechanism at him—something that looked like the tube of a telescope.

Suddenly the plane shivered and stood still. The motor died abruptly. The stick went dead. And yet the plane did not fall. As if upheld by the same repulsive force that drove back the white fog, it simply hung suspended three hundred feet above the heart of the

violet flame.

Then—there was no longer any plane. The stick had melted in Jim's hand, the wings dissolved like wreaths of mist. The entire body had disintegrated into nothingness. Jim sat suspended in the void, and felt himself very slowly descending into the violet column.

Down into the vortex of that bubbling pool, which rimmed him on all sides ... down into the central aperture out of which emerged the leering face of Tode! And as he dropped Jim heard, thin, faint, and very far away, the despairing cry of Lucille....

## CHAPTER 2: *Old Friends—and Foes*

Jim must have lapsed into unconsciousness, for when he opened his eyes there was a gap in his consciousness of the passage of time, though none in his memory. He opened his eyes, and instantly he remembered everything.

Only a brief interval could have elapsed, for it was not quite dark. The fog and the violet flame had cleared away. Overhead a few stars twinkled. Jim was lying on

his side, half-buried in the black, slimy mud of the dried up pool.

There was nothing but the smooth, shelving mud basin, with the scrub oak surrounding it. Tode and the machine had vanished.

Jim pulled himself with an effort out of the sucking mud, and, heavily clogged with it, began to make his way toward the margin.

Stumbling, struggling through the viscid ooze, he shouted Lucille's name despairingly. But no answer came, and his cries only made the utter silence all about him seem more fearsome.

Exhausted by his efforts, he gained the edge of the pool at last, and stopped, trying to orientate himself. As he did so, he saw a human face peering at him out of a clump of scrub oak.

It was the face of an aged man, with a long white beard and rags of clothes that were festooned about him. Jim took a step toward it, shouting a challenge.

Next moment it had hurled itself out of its shelter toward him, and two skeletonlike arms were twined about his shoulders, while the fingers worked upward toward his throat.

The face was that of a madman, crazed by fear. And Jim recognized it. It was the face of Professor Parrish.

Parrish, the trim, immaculate, clean-shaven, urbane old man, whose lectures, imbued with wit and scholarship, had always been the delight of his classes—Parrish reduced to this gibbering maniac! And yet Parrish himself, returned to the site of their experiments after five years!

So fierce was the old man's onset, so desperate his clutch, that for a half-minute or more Jim was reduced to fighting for his life. The clawing fingers, armed with long nails, furrowed Jim's throat, there was a terrific strength in the body, wasted though it was almost to a skeleton.

But it was only for a half-minute that old Parrish's endurance lasted. Suddenly the old man went limp

and tottered forward, dropped upon the ground. Jim bent over him.

"Parrish, you know me! I'm Jim Dent!" he cried. "I came here to save you."

Parrish was muttering something. Jim caught the words "Tode," and "God help Lucille!"

"Parrish, I'm Jim Dent!" Jim cried again, and the old man, shuddering, opened his eyes and recognized him.

"Jim!" he muttered. "Jim Dent! Then where is she? I got away from that devil, found farmhouse empty, got telephone book, found her and 'phoned her. Told her to come. Save—Lucille!"

He fell back, his eyes closed. Jim crouched over the unconscious old man. He was in a state of utter perplexity. He could not quite gather what Parrish had been trying to tell him, and it was with difficulty that he could focus his mind upon the situation, so great had been the shock of finding his former chief

in that condition.

What had become of his plane, and where was Lucille? Jim was positive that he had heard her cry for help out of the vortex in the water.

But there was no water, only the circle of black mud extended in the starlight.

Again and again Jim shouted Lucille's name, and his cries went echoing away through the scrub without result.

Jim looked down at the unconscious old man beside him. He must get Parrish away, get him to Andy Lumm's. He bent over him again and raised him in his arms.

Suddenly he heard two familiar sounds behind him, two dull thumps that sounded less like explosions than echoes, long drawn out, and receding into infinity. There was no other sound quite like them that he had ever heard.

They were the snap of the electrical discharge as the Atom Smasher began to operate, and why the snap had sounded like a heavy body falling a long distance away, was not known.

Tode had said one day, with what Jim had taken for sarcasm, that they represented the wave series of a single sound extended in time to make four-dimensional action, but Jim had never considered the explanation seriously.

That sound, bringing back all Jim's memories of their experiments, brought him to his feet sharply. He swung around. The surface of the pool was a bubbling, seething mass of mud and water. And over its surface that faint violet haze was beginning to spread.

In the center where the light was thickest, something like a gyroscope appeared to be revolving. Out of the gyroscope something was beginning to project—that infernal tube of Lucius Tode. And Jim knew that in the heart of the flame that enormous, distorted face of Lucius Tode would again be visible.

The human nervous system can only endure a certain amount of impact. The sight of that ghastly flame, already condensing into a violet pillar, was more than Jim could stand. He dragged old Parrish to his feet and started off with him into the thickest part of the undergrowth.

A fearful scream behind him stopped him at the very edge of the scrub. He looked back, still supporting the half-conscious old man in his arms. The violet flame was shooting up in a straight pillar, the whole central portion of the pool was dry, and the waters were heaped up all around it.

From the slightly elevated spot where Jim stood, he could see Tode holding Lucille in his arms in the very heart of the fire, which threw a pale, fluorescent light over their faces. Tode was wearing a spotted skin, like that of a leopard, and Lucille was in the blue frock that she had worn when Jim and she had dinner together two evenings before.

Jim dropped old Parrish, shouted in answer, and dashed back like a madman down the slope into the



solid wall of water.

He fought his way desperately through that wall, which seemed of the consistency of soft rubber or treacle, as if some subtle change had taken place in its molecular isomers. It adhered to him without wetting him, and he plunged through it, hearing Lucille cry out again, and yet again.

And now he was through, and once more struggling over the viscid surface of the pond. Behind him he heard old Parrish blundering, and screeching at the top of his voice, but he paid no attention to him.

He could see Lucille more clearly, and the large, hazy outlines of Tode's features were beginning to assume the proper proportions. There was a diabolical leer upon Tode's face, unchanged during the five years since Jim had seen him last, except that it had become more evil, more powerful. The enormous and distorted face that Jim had seen had been simply due to the presence of some refracting medium.

The pillar of violet light was thinning, spreading out

over the pool, but Jim could now see the scene more clearly than before, even as he rushed onward.

The machine was inside what looked like a flat boat, but more circular than a boat, and apparently was made of some metal resembling aluminum. Either from the metal hull or from the mechanism inside it there was emitted a pungent odor resembling chlorine.

The mechanism itself bore some resemblance to the old Atom Smasher of five years before, but it appeared to be immensely more complicated. Wheels of various sizes were set at every conceivable angle around the central tube, from which the violet light was emanating, and all were rotating and gyrating so fast that they looked like discs of light. The boat itself was trembling, and this movement appeared to be communicated to the boiling mud in the central part of the pool.

As Jim tried to leap down through the sucking mud to snatch Lucille from Tode, the latter stopped, straightened himself, and pointed a short tube at Jim's

heart.

Jim felt as if an enormous, invisible force had struck him in the chest. It was apparently the same repulsive force that had driven back the waters. The shock was not a violent one. It did not throw him off his feet. It merely pushed him slowly and irresistibly backward.

And the whole picture was beginning to fade. Etched sharply in the violet light one moment, it now looked like a drawing that had been covered with tissue paper.

The outlines were dissolving into a haze—or, rather, each line seemed reproduced an infinite number of times, as the edge of a vibrating saw shows an infinitude of edges. The violet fire was becoming still more diffused. It hovered over the waters, a pale, flickering glow. And simultaneously the walls of water began to break and come surging forward.

Jim saw Lucille stretching out her arms toward him, and tried to struggle forward, but in vain. She cried out his name, and he put all his strength into that

desperate futile struggle to reach her. But he was being borne backward by the invisible power in the tube. The rushing torrent was surging about his knees; grew waist deep: in another moment Jim was swimming for his life against the furious flood.

Suddenly, however, the tremendous pressure on his chest was relaxed. Tode had turned the tube away from him. He was leaning forward out of the boat and grasped old Parrish, who had been flung violently against it by the dissolving waters.

The same flood carried Jim to the boat's side. Here, however, the flood was only knee deep, owing to the repulsion still being exercised by the violet light, which was glimmering feebly. Jim found his feet and leaped into the craft. He grasped Lucille in his arms.

He turned to confront Tode, who had just dragged old Parrish over the side. The three men confronted one another.

"Turn that tube on me, and I'll jump into your damn machinery and bust it!" Jim shouted.

An ironical expression came on Tode's face. It was clear that he still considered himself master of the situation. "At the immediate moment, Dent, the lives of all of us depend upon your keeping absolutely still," he answered. "Take my advice and sit down!"

Jim saw Lucille's face, ghastly in the faint violet light that played about it. The girl had fainted. She was lying unconscious, her feet against the circular metal plate that protected the machinery, her head upon the rail that ran around the boat's upper edge. Tode, without waiting for Jim's answer, stepped over the plate and took his seat at a sort of instrument board with control levers and thumb screws that apparently controlled the needles on four dials. He touched a button, and instantly the violet light disappeared.

With its vanishing, the waves came surging forward, and lapped violently against the hull, as if about to overwhelm the vessel, which, however, seemed immovable. It simply rose higher in the water.

Jim understood the cause of this. Those gyroscopes would retain the hull in the same position against

anything but a mechanical force strong enough to ruin it. He watched Tode as he sat at the instrument board, which was illuminated by two tiny lights of what looked like mercury-vapor. His face, handsome and cruel as ever, was tense as he manipulated the thumb screws. Beside him lay Parrish, faintly whimpering. The old man had evidently abandoned all hope of effecting his escape, or of rescuing his daughter.

It was unbearable to have to sit there, knowing that the three of them were absolutely at Tode's mercy, and yet there was nothing else to do.

Tode looked up with a saturnine smile. "It's a delicate operation to blur the present without shooting out a hundred years or so in time," he said, "but my micrometer's pretty accurate, Dent. Don't move, I caution you!" He smiled again. "Yes, Dent, time is something like the fourth dimension of space, as we believed in the old days, and I've proved it."

Jim saw Tode touch the screw that controlled the fourth dial, and instantly it was borne in on him that

each of the dials controlled one spatial dimension. This fourth, then, was the time dimension!

Could it be true that Tode had solved the practical problem of traveling in time, theoretically implied since the discoveries of Einstein?

He had known in the old days that the Atom Smasher might be adapted to this purpose, but neither Parrish nor he had dreamed of turning aside from their endeavor to utilize it for the purpose of releasing atomic energy.

Thump! Thump! The familiar old sound, rushing back into memory after all those years, the release of the electrical discharge, echoing through infinity! The scrub around the pool blurred and was gone. A vast gray panorama extended itself on either side of them.

They were travelling—in space—and time too. Jim no longer doubted. And, chilled with horror, he sat there, his arm about Lucille's unconscious form.

### CHAPTER 3: *Into the Infinite*

How long he sat there he did not know. Minutes or hours seemed all the same to him. Nothing but that gray monochrome, of neither light nor darkness, that endless panorama of miles and years, blended together into this chaos!

But suddenly there came a shout from Tode. The blur ceased, the lights flickered. Again there sounded the two thumps of the electrical discharge. The vibrating mechanism grew steady. Above them, out of the grayness, a moon disclosed itself, then the pin-points of stars. All about them was an immense, sandy waste.

"Know where we are, Dent?" came Tode's chuckle.

Jim was not sufficiently master of himself to attempt to answer.

"We are on what will be the Russian steppes some fifty thousand years ahead of us in time," grinned Tode. "This is an interlude between two ice ages. Observe how pleasantly warm the climate is, for Russia. Unfortunately the receding glaciers carried off the top-soil, which accounts for the barrenness of



the district, but in another century this country will be overgrown with ferns, and inhabited by the mastodon and wild horse, and a few enterprising palaeolithic hunters, who will come in to track them down and destroy them with their stone axes."

"I think you're the same sort of damn liar you always were, Tode," answered Jim—but without conviction. There was something terrific about that desolation. Nothing within a thousand miles of Long Island corresponded to it.

"You'll be convinced pretty quickly, when you see my specimen," answered Tode. "I let him off here on the way to the pool. He's not exactly presentable, and when I got the idea of picking up Lucille and taking her back with me, I thought it best not to let her see him. He didn't want to be let off. Was afraid I wouldn't pick him up again, and I'll admit it was a matter of pretty careful reckoning. But this is the place, almost to the yard.

"Yes, I've done some close reckoning, Dent, but the cleverest part of the business was letting old Parrish

think he'd got away from me. I knew he'd telephone Lucille. You know, I always had the brains of the outfit, Dent," he continued, with a smirk of self-satisfaction.

He looked out of the boat. "And here, if I'm not mistaken, comes my specimen," he added.

Something was running across the steppes toward them. It came nearer, took human form. It was human! A man—but such a man as Jim had never seen before outside the covers of a book. And he recognised the race immediately.

It was a Neanderthal man, one of the race that co-existed with the highly developed Cro-Magnons some thirty thousand years ago. Man and not ape, though the face was bestial, and there were huge ridges above the eyebrows.

And if Jim had needed conviction, the sight of this gibbering creature, now climbing into the boat and fawning upon Tode, convinced him. For the Neanderthal man vanished from the scene long

before the beginning of recorded history.

For a few moments a deathly faintness overcame him ... his eyes closed, he felt unconsciousness rushing in upon him like a black cloud.

"It's all right, Dent—don't look so scared!" came Tode's mocking voice.

Jim opened his eyes, shook off that cloud of darkness with an immense effort. The boat was throbbing violently as the wheels gyrated, the violet light had become a pillar as thick as a man, and shot straight up to a height of fifty feet, before it rolled away. Lucille was lying where she had been, her eyes still staring up unseeing at the stars. Old Parrish was whining and whimpering as he crouched in his place.

And at Tode's feet crouched the Neanderthal man, repulsive, bestial, even though hardly formidable, and filling the last vacant spot inside the boat. He was gibbering and mouthing as he fawned upon Tode and pressed his hand to his hairy face. He continued to crouch and looked up at his master with doglike eyes.

Repulsive, and yet man, not ape. Distinctly human, perhaps a little lower than the Australian aborigine, the Neanderthal showed by his reverence that the human faculty of worship existed in him.

"Meet Cain, one of my Drilgoes," said Tode, with a grin. "A faithful servant. I left him here to wait for me on the return journey. Cain's just my pet name for him because he subsists on the fruits of the earth, don't you, Cain?"

The Drilgo grunted, and pressed Tode's hand to his repulsive lips, which were fringed with a reddish beard. Suddenly Tode began to laugh uproariously. "Feel anything wrong with your head, Dent?" he asked.

Dent put up his hand and pulled away a quantity of charred hair. His forehead began to itch, and, rubbing his finger across it, he realized that his eyebrows were gone. Tode laughed still louder.

"You've kept your teeth by about two seconds' grace, Dent, but I shouldn't be surprised if you needed

dental attention shortly," he said. "What a pity dentists won't be invented for another forty or fifty thousand years."

"You're a devil!" cried Jim.

"You see, the human body is very resistant to the Ray," Tode went on. "It almost seems as if there is an organizing principle within it. Even the animal tissues are resistant, though not to the same extent as the human ones. It takes about twenty seconds for the organized human form to be disintegrated. But hair and beaks and claws, being superficial matter, vanish almost as soon as the Ray is turned on them. Ten seconds more, and you'd have been obliterated, Dent, just as your plane was.

"Yes, rub your head. Your hair will probably grow again—if I decide to let you live. It rather depends upon what impression you make upon Lucille as a bald-headed hero. After all, I didn't invite you to accompany us. It's your own lookout."

Jim could find nothing to say to that. He was

discovering more and more that they were all helpless in Tode's hands.

"Sit back!" snarled Tode suddenly. He gave the Drilgo a push that sent him sprawling into the bottom of the boat. "Dent, your life depends upon your absolute acquiescence to my proposals. I didn't like you particularly in the old days, any more than you liked me. I thought you were a fool. On the other hand, I've no active reason to hate you, at present. It may be that I can use you.

"Meanwhile we've got a longish journey before us, ten thousand years more, multiplied by the fourth power of two thousand miles. Seems simple? Well, I had to invent the mathematical process for it. Reckon in the gravitational attraction of the planets, and you'll begin to get an idea of the complexity of it. So, in vulgar parlance, we're not likely to arrive till morning."

He glanced at Lucille, who was still lying unconscious with Jim's arm about her. Then his eyes rose to meet Jim's, and a sneering smile played about his lips. That

smile was the acknowledgment of their rivalry for the girl's affections. And it was more—it was a challenge.

Tode welcomed that rivalry because, Jim could see, he meant to keep him alive under conditions of servitude, to demonstrate to Lucille his superiority.

Tode turned his thumbscrews, and the two thuds resounded. The violet column sank down, the boat vibrated, the level stretch of land became a blur again. The moon and stars vanished. Once more the four were off on that terrific journey.

At first they seemed to be traversing space that was shot through by alternate light and darkness, so that at times Jim could see the other occupants of the boat clearly, while at other times there was only Tode visible at the instrument board, with the dark outlines of the Drilgo, Cain, sprawled at his feet. But soon these streaks seemed to come closer and closer together, until the duration of each was only a fraction of a second. And closer, until light and darkness blended into a universal gray. These, Jim knew, were the alternations of night and day.

They were traveling—incredible as it was—in time as well as space, though whether backward or forward Jim could not know. From the presence of the Neanderthal man, however, Jim was convinced that Tode was taking them back more thousands of years, into the beginnings of humanity.

A fearful journey! A madder journey than Jim could have conceived of, had he not been a participant in it. He was losing all sense of reality. He was hardly convinced that he would not awaken in New York, to discover that the whole episode had been a dream.

Was this Lucille, the girl he loved ... with whom he had dined in New York only a day or two before ... this unconscious form, stretched out on the deck of the weird ship that was rushing through eternity? Or, rather, it was they who were rushing through space and time upon a stationary ship! What was reality, and what was dream, then?

Tode called "Come over here, Dent! I want to talk to you!"



Jim picked his way over the metal floor of the round boat, came up to Tode, and sat down beside him above the sprawling form of the Drilgo, Cain.

"You were a fool to come here, Dent." Tode turned with a malicious smile from his seat at the instrument board. "You didn't have to come. I take it that you are in love with Lucille, you poor imbecile, and still cherish dreams of winning her. We'll take up that matter in due course.

"Do you think I've been idle during these five years of my exile? I've been too busy even to come back for the woman I was in love with. And do you know what I've been doing during all this hellish period? Charting courses, Dent! Mapping out all the planetary movements back for uncounted ages—roughly, crudely, of course, but the best I was able to. These are difficult seas to navigate, though they may not seem so. You fool," he added savagely, "why didn't you come in with me in the old days? I told you that the Atom Smasher could be used to travel through time, and you mocked at me as a dreamer.

"I chose my hour. When everything was ready, I set forth on the most desperate journey ever attempted by man. Talk of Columbus!—he had nothing on me. I tell you, Dent, I've been back to the Archaean Age, back to the time when nothing but crawling worms moved on the face of the earth. And I've been forward to the time when an errant planet will disrupt the earth into a shower of lava—and I nearly wrecked the boat. Dent.

"I've won, Dent! I've won! I've solved the problem that gives man immortality! All the epochs that have existed since God first formed the world are mine to play with! I have seen myself as a puling infant, and as a greybeard. I have made myself immortal, because, with this machine, I can set back the clock of time. I have found a land where I am worshipped as a god."

Tode's eyes glittered with maniacal fires. He went on in a voice of indescribable triumph:

"I'm a god there, Dent. Do you want to know where that land is? It is Atlantis, sunk beneath the waves

nine thousand years before recorded history opened. It is Atlantis, from which the Cro-Magnons fled in their ships, to land on the coasts of Spain and France, and become the ancestors of modern man.

"In old Atlantis, still not wholly submerged, I have made myself a god. I have mastered the savage Drilgoes whom the Atlanteans oppressed. All the spoils of their ruined cities are at my disposal. And I came back to get Lucille, whom I had never ceased to love. Together Lucille and I will rule like god and goddess.

"Join me, Dent. I'm a god in Atlantis—a god, I tell you. The lesser races fear me as a supernatural being. Only the city remains uncaptured, but it is mine whenever I choose to take it. A god—a god—a god!"

Jim saw now what he had not realized before, that Tode was insane. It would, indeed, have been a miracle if he had been able to retain his sanity under such circumstances as he had described. His voice rose into a wild scream. Yes, Tode was mad—just such a madman as any of the old Roman emperors, drunk

with power, each in his turn the sole ruler of the world.

"The Earth is mine!" Tode screamed. "Before the modern world was dreamed of, before the nations were created, Atlantis was the sole power that held dominion over the scattered tribes of mankind. And she is in my hand whenever I strike.

"Wealth incalculable, treasures such as man has never since seen, marvels of scientific discovery, flying machines that would make ours look foolish, paintings grander than have since been executed—all these things exist in the proud city that will shortly be at my command. And I have my Drilgoes, the inferior race, to serve me. They worship me because they know I am a god. Join me, Dent, and taste the joys of being one of the supreme rulers of the world."

In spite of his undoubted madness, there was such power in Tode's voice that Jim could not help believe what he had said.

"Well," snarled Tode. "You hesitate to give me your

answer, Dent?"

"Lucille and I are engaged to be married," answered Jim, and the words were drawn from his lips almost against his will. "We love each other. I am not going to lie to you and then betray you, Tode."

The expression on Tode's face was demoniacal. He snatched up the deadly tube that contained the violet fire and turned it upon Jim. Again Jim felt that repulsive force pushing him back. He gasped for breath, and tensed his whole body in supreme resistance, while he tried to grapple with Tode in vain.

But suddenly Tode dropped the tube, and a roar of laughter broke from his lips.

"You fool!" he shouted. "I tell you I am a god, the one god, supreme above all. Do you think to match your puny will against my own? I tell you Lucille is mine. And for ever, Dent. Whenever we two have reached old age, all that will be necessary for us to do will be to turn this screw a hair's breadth back into the past,

and we are both young again. By holding this vessel steady in four-dimensional space, I can achieve immortality."

"Yes, Tode," answered Jim, "but, you see, that's the one thing that you haven't been able to work out yet."

The words seemed to come automatically from Jim's lips. It was only after he had spoken them that he realized they were true. For a moment Tode glared at him; then suddenly, with a shriek of insane rage, he leaped from the instrument board and swung the ray tube with all his might.

Jim felt the blow descend with stunning force upon his head. He reeled, flung out his arms, and toppled forward, unconscious....

#### **CHAPTER 4: *Escape***

An intolerably bright light that seemed to sear his eyeballs was the first thing of which Jim was conscious. Then he became aware of his aching head, of a sense of utter lassitude, as if he had been bruised

all over in some machine that had caught him up and held him in its grip for endless aeons.

At last, despite the pain in his eyes, he managed to get his eyelids open. He tried to struggle to his feet, only to discover that he was firmly bound with what appeared to be tough creepers, pliant as ropes.

After the lapse of a few minutes, during which he struggled with the receding waves of unconsciousness, he came to a realization of his surroundings. That light that had so distressed him—though the effects were now beginning to pass off—was a pillar of smoke and flame, shooting out of the crater of a volcano about a mile away, across a valley.

He was lying in the entrance to a cave, pegged out on his back, and bound by the tough creepers to the stakes driven into the ground. Up to the mouth of the cave grew huge tree-ferns, cattails, cycads, and such growths as existed in earlier ages in the warm, moist regions of the world.

Beneath the level of the cave a heavy white fog

completely shrouded the valley, extending up to within a short distance of the volcano opposite. But on the upper slopes of the volcano the sunlight played, making its crater a sheen of glassy lava, intolerably bright.

Beyond the volcano Jim could see what looked like an expanse of ocean.

He groaned, and at the sound a creature came shambling forward, carrying what looked like a huge melon in either hand. Jim recognized the Drilgo, Cain.

Chattering and mumbling, Cain placed one of the fruits to Jim's mouth. It was a sort of bread-fruit, but he was too nauseated to eat, and rejected it with disgust. Cain offered him the second fruit.

It was a hollow gourd, the interior filled with a clear fluid. Jim drank greedily as the Drilgo put it to his lips. The contents were like water, but slightly acid. Jim felt refreshed. He looked about him.

The Drilgo uttered a chattering call, and immediately



a host of the savages swarmed into the cave. Men—undoubtedly men, in spite of the brow ridges and the receding foreheads, carrying long spears, consisting of chipped and pointed heads of stone, with holes bored in them, through which long bands of creepers passed, fastening them firmly to the shaft.

Chattering and gesticulating, the Drilgoes surrounded Jim as he lay helpless on the ground. Their savage faces, their rolling eyes, the threatening gestures that they made with their spears, convinced Jim that his end was a foregone conclusion.

But suddenly a distant rumbling sound was heard, increasing rapidly in volume. The floor of the cave vibrated; masses of rock dropped from the walls. The light of the volcano across the valley was suddenly obscured in an immense cloud of black smoke. The twilight within the cave was succeeded by almost impenetrable darkness.

Shrieking in terror, the Drilgoes bolted, while Jim lay straining at his ropes, expecting each moment to be crushed by the masses of rock that were falling all

about him.

Suddenly a soft whisper came to Jim through the darkness: "Jim! Are you safe! Where are you? I can't see you! Speak to me!"

It was Lucille's voice, and Jim called back, husky and tremulous in the sheer joy that had succeeded his anticipation of instant death.

Then he felt the girl kneeling at his side, and heard her hacking at his bonds. A whole minute passed before the stone knife was able to sever the last of the stout withes, however.

Then Jim was swaying on his feet, and Lucille's arms were about him, and for a few moments their fears were forgotten in the renewal of their love.

"I heard what that devil said to you last night," the girl said. "He means to kill you with awful tortures. He is away now, on some task or other, but he'll be back at any moment. We must get away at once—we three. Dad's in another cave not far away, and his

guards bolted after the earthquake."

The earth was still rumbling, and the cavern still vibrating, but it was clear that there was no time to lose. As soon as the quake subsided the Drilgoes would return. Guided by Lucille, Jim groped his way through the cavern. The girl called softly at intervals, and presently Jim heard old Parrish's answering call. Then the old man's form appeared in silhouette against the dark.

"I've got Jim," Lucille whispered. "Are you ready, dad?"

"Yes, yes, I'm ready," chattered the old man. "Now's our chance. I know a place where we can hide in the thick forests, where the Ray of the Atlanteans cannot penetrate the mists. Let's go! Let's go!"

Gripping hands, the three started back toward the point where a faint patch of darkness showed out the entrance to the cavern. They were nearing it when another and more violent shock flung them upon their faces.

Huge masses of rock came hurtling down from the roof and sides of the cavern, and again the three seemed to escape by a miracle.

Suddenly a huge shaft of fire shot from the crater opposite, evolving into an inverted cone that made the whole land dazzlingly bright. It pierced the mists in the valley underneath, and by that light Jim could see a great wave of lava streaming down the mountain sides, like soup spilled out of a bowl.

A gush of black smoke followed, and the light went out.

"Now!" gasped Parrish, and, clinging to one another, the three darted out of the cavern's entrance. Another terrific shock sent them stumbling and reeling and sprawling down the side of the mountain. Jim heard old Parrish wailing, and, as the shock subsided, groped his way to his side.

"You hurt?" he shouted.

"Lucille, Lucille," moaned the old man. "She's dead! A

big rock crushed her. I wish I was dead too."

Jim called Lucille's name frantically, and to his immense relief heard her crying faintly out of the darkness. He rushed to her side and held her in his arms.

"Where are you hit, darling?"

"I'm—all right," she panted. "I was stunned for a moment. I—can—go on now."

But she went limp in Jim's arms, and Jim picked her up and stood irresolute, until he heard Parrish shambling toward him over the heaving ground.

"She's not hurt, I think, only fainted," said Jim. "Which way, Parrish? You lead us."

"Down the slope," panted Parrish. "We'll be in the ferns in a minute. We can hide there for a while, till she's able to walk. God help us all! And I was once Professor of Physical Chemistry at Columbia!"

The outcry might have seemed comical under other circumstances; as it was, Jim heartily re-echoed old Parrish's sentiments in his heart.

The last shock was subsiding in faint earth tremors. The two men plunged down into the heavy fog, which quickly covered them, Jim carrying Lucille in his arms. He felt the ferny undergrowth all about him, the thick boles of tree-ferns emerged out of the mist.

"We can stop here for a while," panted Parrish.

"Crouch down! They'll never find us in this fog, and in a few minutes, when Lucille's better, we can go on."

You must tell me where we are and what our chances are," said Jim, after again ascertaining that Lucille was unharmed.

"I'll tell you, Dent, as quick as I can. It's the place where I've spent five years of hell as the slave of that devil, Tode. I never dreamed, when we were working on the old Atom Smasher, that he had adapted it to travel in the fourth dimension. He's taken us back twelve thousand years or so to the island of Atlantis.

History hasn't begun yet. Atlantis is the only civilization in the world. The rest are Drilgoes, Neanderthal men, wandering in the forests, and still in their stone age.

"It's true, Dent, what old Plato learned from the Egyptian priests. Atlantis has been slowly sinking for thousands of years, and all that's left now is the one great island that we're on. Nearly all the Atlanteans, the Cro-Magnon men, have perished, except for a few who have crossed in ships to the coasts of France and Spain. They'll be the founders of modern Europe—Basques and Iberians, and Bretons and Welshmen. Our ancestors! It makes my brain reel to think of it!"

"Go on! Go on!" said Jim.

"There's a great city on the island, known as Atlantis too. As big as London or New York. With flying-machines and temples and art galleries and big ships that they're building to carry them away when the next subsidence comes. They know they're doomed, for every few days there's an eruption now.

"Tode means to make himself master of Atlantis, and transport it into another epoch by means of the Atom Smasher. But he's never managed to enter. He's made himself a god in the eyes of the Drilgoes, the savages who inhabit these forests. He's planning to lead them against the city, and he's got an army of thousands from all parts of the interior, who worship him as divine.

"The Atlanteans are unwarlike. They've forgotten how to fight in their thousands of years of peace. But they've got a Ray ten times as strong as Tode's, that brings instant death to everything it touches. It shrivels it up. It's a different principle. I don't understand it, but it's this Ray that keeps the Drilgoes from capturing the city.

"Tode's got a laboratory inside the cave, fitted up with apparatus that he brought from Chicago, the world capital of the year 3000 A. D., after disintegrating the atoms and recombining them. But he hasn't succeeded altogether. He hasn't learned everything. The future isn't quite clear, like the past. There's a dark cloud moves across the spectral lines and blurs



them. I think it's the element of free will—or God!"

"I know," Jim answered. "He can't hold that boat steady in four-dimensional space, as he pretends he can. If he could, it would mean that man was wholly master of his destiny. He can't and he never will.

"There's an unknown quantity comes in, Parrish. It is God, and that's what's going to beat him in the end."

"I've not been as idle as Tode thinks," said Parrish, with a senile leer. "I know more about the Atom Smasher than he dreams of. He thinks me just an old fool, the remnants of whose brains are useful to him in his laboratory. That's why he's kept me alive so far. He'll find out his mistake," he chuckled. "I have something Tode doesn't dream of."

Suddenly Parrish's air of intense seriousness vanished. He chuckled and fumbled in his rags. Jim felt a small object like a lever pressed into his hand and then withdrawn.

"It's death, Dent," chuckled old Parrish. "The

concentrated essence of the destructive principle. It's a lever I fitted into a concealed groove in the Atom Smasher unknown to Tode. This lever has a universal joint and connects with a hidden chamber, and when pulled will catapult the annihilated components of a small quantity of uranium in any direction we desire. The release of the slumbering energy of this uranium will produce an explosion of proportions beyond the wildest dreams of engineers—perhaps, one great enough to throw the Earth out of its orbit!"

"Uranium!... Breaking up its components!" gasped Jim. "You mean you can actually do that?"

"Yes!" chuckled Parrish. "I'm keeping it for the day when Tode becomes a god. When he's steadied the boat in time-space and halted the march of the past, and when he's got Lucille—then, Dent, I shall so pull the lever that it will release the energy straight at Tode—and destroy the Atom-Smasher, ourselves, and even, perhaps, the whole Earth!"

And he burst into a peal of such wild laughter that Jim realized the old man's wits were gone.

Was it true, that amazing story? It was difficult to know, and yet anything seemed possible in this amazing world into which Jim had suddenly been thrown.

The vast pall of smoke cast out by the volcano was beginning to subside. Slowly a spectral light began to filter through the valley. Through the fog Jim could see glimpses of the ferny undergrowth, the giant tree-ferns and cycads that towered aloft. It was like a picture of the earth when the mastodons, the grass-eaters and the meat-eaters disputed for its supremacy.

Jim bent over Lucille. He saw her stir, he heard her murmur his name. Suddenly she sat up, fixed her eyes on his, and shuddered.

"I'm all right, Jim. Let's go," she said. "I can walk now."

She staggered to her feet. Jim put out his hand to support her, but she shook her head. Jim touched old Parrish on the arm. He started and uttered a wild

screech; then seemed to come to himself and rose.

But that screech of his was re-echoed from the mountainside above. Other voices took up the echoes. Lucille clutched at Jim in a frenzy of fear.

"The Drilgoes!" she whispered. "They're on our trail!"

Seizing old Parrish by the arm, Jim started to drag him into the recesses of the fern forest. Suddenly the bestial face of a Drilgo appeared.

A yell broke from the man's throat. The hairy arm shot back. Jim saw the stone tip of the long spear poised overhead. He leaped forward, delivering a blow in the man's midriff with all the strength of his right arm.

The Drilgo grunted and doubled forward, the spear falling from his hand. The heavy head of stone embedded itself in the soft ground, so that the spear remained upright. As the man collapsed he yelled at the top of his voice.

"This way! This way!" gibbered old Parrish, suddenly alert.

But now the undergrowth all about them was alive with Drilgoes. The three dodged and doubled like hunted hares. High overhead something began to clack with a sound like that made by a woodpecker drilling a tree, but infinitely louder.

And out of the void above came Tode's voice, shouting commands to the Drilgoes in their own language.

Suddenly a column of fire shot up from the volcano, infusing the white mists with a reddish glare.

Overhead the three could see Tode. He was flying with a pair of mechanical wings strapped to his shoulders, not more than two hundred feet above them. With a shout of triumph he swooped down. In his hand was a small cylinder, about the mouth of which a phosphorescent violet light was beginning to play.

"I've got you, Dent," he screamed in triumph, hovering above the three, while the wings drummed

and vibrated till they seemed the mere play of light and shadow about Tode's shoulders. "Halt, or I'll blast your body and soul to hell! Halt, or I'll kill *her*!"

The deadly tube was pointing steadily at Lucille's body as Tode hovered ten feet overhead, perfectly still save for the whirring wings. The three stopped dead, and Tode, with a shout of triumph, began calling the Drilgoes, who swarmed forward out of the undergrowth.

Huge brown bodies, nude save for their skins of jungle-cat or serpent, they emerged, quickly forming a ring about the three prisoners. Tode fluttered to the ground.

"Fools, did you think you could escape that way?" he asked. "As for you, Dent. I'm going to convince you of the reality of four-dimensional space as you would not be convinced in the old days. Do you know what I'm going to do with you? I'm going to strip the skin from you with the ray, and take you into the anatomical room at Columbia University and leave you there as an exhibit, Dent!"

Tode grinned like a madman. But Jim was looking past him, at something that had suddenly appeared upon the far horizon.

It was a round disc of bluish white, a disc like the moon, but slightly smaller, a disc that flickered as if it had an eyelid that was being winked repeatedly. Simultaneously screams broke from the throats of all the Drilgoes. They stampeded.

Tode whirled about and saw. With a curse he leaped into the air and whirled away.

Out of that disc a slender, blue-white beam shot suddenly, driving a pathway through the fog, and disclosing the dark depths of the valley.

"The Eye! The Eye!" screeched Parrish. "Down on the ground! Down! Down!"

He dropped, and Jim caught Lucille and flung himself headlong with her. To and fro overhead, but only a few feet above them, moved the searchlight. Shrieks broke from the Drilgoes' throats as they scattered

through the jungle.

Everywhere that ray moved, trees and undergrowth simply disappeared. A bunch of Drilgoes, caught by it, were obliterated in an instant. Great gaps were left through the undergrowth as the ray passed.

It faded as quickly as it had come, and instantly old Parrish was on his feet, dragging at his daughter.

"Now! Now!" he babbled, heading along one of the burned tracks through the undergrowth.

Jim seized Lucille and the two raced in the wake of old Parrish. Behind them they could hear the Drilgoes shouting, but a dense, impenetrable darkness was already beginning to settle down over the valley. They lost the track and went crashing through the ferns, on and on until all was silence about them.

Suddenly Parrish went down like a log. He lay breathing heavily, completely exhausted. When Jim spoke to him a feeble muttering was the only answer. Jim and Lucille dropped to the ground exhausted



beside him.

## **CHAPTER 5: *The Eye of Atlantis***

For perhaps half an hour the three lay there, hearing nothing. It seemed to be night, for the darkness was impenetrable, save for the lurid flashes of fire from the volcano. Parrish, who was slowly recovering his strength, was mumbling incessantly. It was with difficulty that Jim recalled him to a realization of his surroundings.

"Where is the city of Atlantis?" he asked him.

"Over there," mumbled Parrish. "Behind the volcano. Why do you ask me?"

"I'm thinking of going there."

"Eh? Going there? You're mad. The Eye will see you, the Eye that can see for a hundred miles. They'll turn the Ray on you. Nothing is too small for the Eye. And they watch night and day."

"The Eye is off now."

"It's never off. The Eye is dark. It grows white only when they are about to use the Ray. Perhaps the Eye is watching us now."

"Nevertheless," said Jim, "I think we would do well to try to enter the city. We can't live here in the jungle at the mercy of these Drilgoes."

"It is impossible to enter. All strangers are killed by the Atlanteans."

"Dad," interposed Lucille, "I think we'd better do what Jim suggests. One of us must decide."

"My idea is that you take us to some place where we can get a view of the city," said Jim. "Then we can make up our minds what to do. We've got to get somewhere out of this jungle."

Parrish rose to his feet, mumbling. "If we go round the base of the volcano we can see Atlantis," he said. "It's always light there. In the daytime they drive away the fogs by some means they've got, and at night they have an artificial sun. But we'll be killed,

we'll all be killed."

Mumbling and muttering, he began groping his way through the undergrowth in the direction of the volcano, whose flashes were again becoming more frequent, affording a means of directing their route. Obscure rumblings were again beginning to shake the earth. For an hour the three picked their way steadily upward through the ferns, until the ground became more open.

They were approaching the base of the volcano, whose side now towered above them, the upper part glassy with vitreous lava.

Suddenly Parrish, who was still leading, stopped and began to tremble with fear. Stepping to his side, Jim heard the low muttering of voices not far away.

Very cautiously he moved forward through the thin fern scrub, until the glow of burning embers caught his sight. He stopped, hearing the voices more distinctly, and again moved forward.

Three Drilgoes, huge, bestial men, and evidently an outpost, were squatting around the ashes, devouring something with noisy gusto.

Softly as Jim had moved, their acute ears had caught the sound of his footsteps. They rose, still holding what they were eating in their hands, and, grasping their stone spears, moved in three separate ways toward the edge of the clearing.

The man nearest Jim uttered a guttural exclamation and, after sniffing a moment, began to lope in his direction. Suddenly he stopped short, petrified with astonishment and fear at the sight of a man who, instinct told him, was neither Atlantean nor of his own kind.

Jim leaped, tackling him about the knees, and brought him heavily to the ground. As the Drilgo fell, the spear clattered from his hand, but from his snakeskin girdle he pulled a long, curved knife of chipped obsidian, sharp as a razor.

Jim grasped the Drilgo's wrist, but in a moment he

saw that he was no match for the creature in strength. He drew back his right arm and delivered a punch to the solar plexus with all his strength.

As the Drilgo's hand grew limp he snatched away the knife. There was no helping what he did for the two others were close upon him.

A thrust, a slashing blow, and the Drilgo was weltering in his life-blood. A backward leap, and Jim evaded the flung spear by a hair's breadth.

Knife in hand he leaped forward, and, dodging in beneath the long shaft of the weapon, got in a slash that almost cut the Drilgo's body in two.

The third Drilgo, seeing his two companions in their death-throes, flung away his spear and fled with loud howls into the jungle.

Jim stepped back. Lucille and her father were already almost at his heels. "It's all right," he called. "Come this way!" He led them through the ferny growth in such a manner that they should not see the two dead

bodies. Nevertheless, he felt that Lucille knew.

"Let's see what they were cooking," he said.

But again he turned quickly. He could not know for sure what flesh that was, roasting and scorching on the embers, and he had no desire to know. It might have been monkey, but ... he turned away, and as he did so, Parrish picked up several round objects that were lying a little distance away.

"These are good to eat," he said. "A sort of bread-fruit. I've lived on it for five years," he added with a sort of grotesque pathos.

They munched the fruit as they proceeded up the mountain, and found it satisfying. Parrish seemed more himself again, though he still muttered at intervals. Lucille clung closely to Jim as they proceeded.

They were treading on lava now, vitreous, and smooth as glass. It was impossible to proceed further in that direction. They turned their steps around the base in

the direction of the sea.

After another hour, during which their way was lit by almost continuous lurid flashes from the crater, a patch of illumination, apparently out at sea, began to become visible. A half hour more, and they were rounding the volcano's base, and suddenly it burst upon them, a stupendous spectacle that drew an exclamation of amazement from Jim's lips.

That low, flat background was the sea, the sound of whose breakers was faintly audible. Between sea and land ran a narrow, slender causeway, perhaps a mile in length. And beyond that, set on a small island, was the most splendid city that Jim could have imagined.

Like New York—very like New York, with its mighty towers, but more symmetrical, sloping upward from the sea toward a towering rampart at the heart of it, crowned with huge domes and minarets and serpentine ramps and mighty blocks of stone that must have sheltered as many occupants as New York's highest skyscrapers.

The whole was snow-white, and gleamed softly in an artificial light dispensed from an enormous artificial planet that seemed to hover above the ramparts.

"God!" whispered Jim in awe as he gazed at the great city.

"You cannot cross that causeway," whimpered old Parrish. "It's death to try. One sweep of the Ray will blot out every living thing."

"Hush! Listen!" came from Lucille's lips. "Something's moving down there!"

The distant murmur of voices, the indescribable "feel" of the proximity of other human beings told Jim that they were in imminent danger. He glanced about him. A little overhead was an outcrop of enormous boulders, standing up like a little fortress above the smooth lava.

"Get behind there!" Jim whispered.

They turned and ran, slipping and stumbling up the



smooth slope. Reaching the boulders, they ensconced themselves hastily behind them. Jim peered out through a crevice between two of the largest stones. The sound of moving things became more audible.

Then, as a flash of flame shot from the crater overhead, Jim saw a black human horde creeping like an array of ants around the base of the mountain not far beneath.

Just like an army of warrior ants it seemed to flow onward, in perfect order. And in the midst of it a faint violet light began to be visible.

Parrish seized Jim's arm, shaking with terror. "You know what that is, Dent?" he whimpered.

"It's Tode's Drilgoes, moving for a night attack upon Atlantis," answered Jim. "And that thing in the middle is the Atom Smasher."

It seemed hours before the last of the serried ranks of Drilgoes had passed. By the light of a lurid flash from the volcano Jim could see the column winding toward

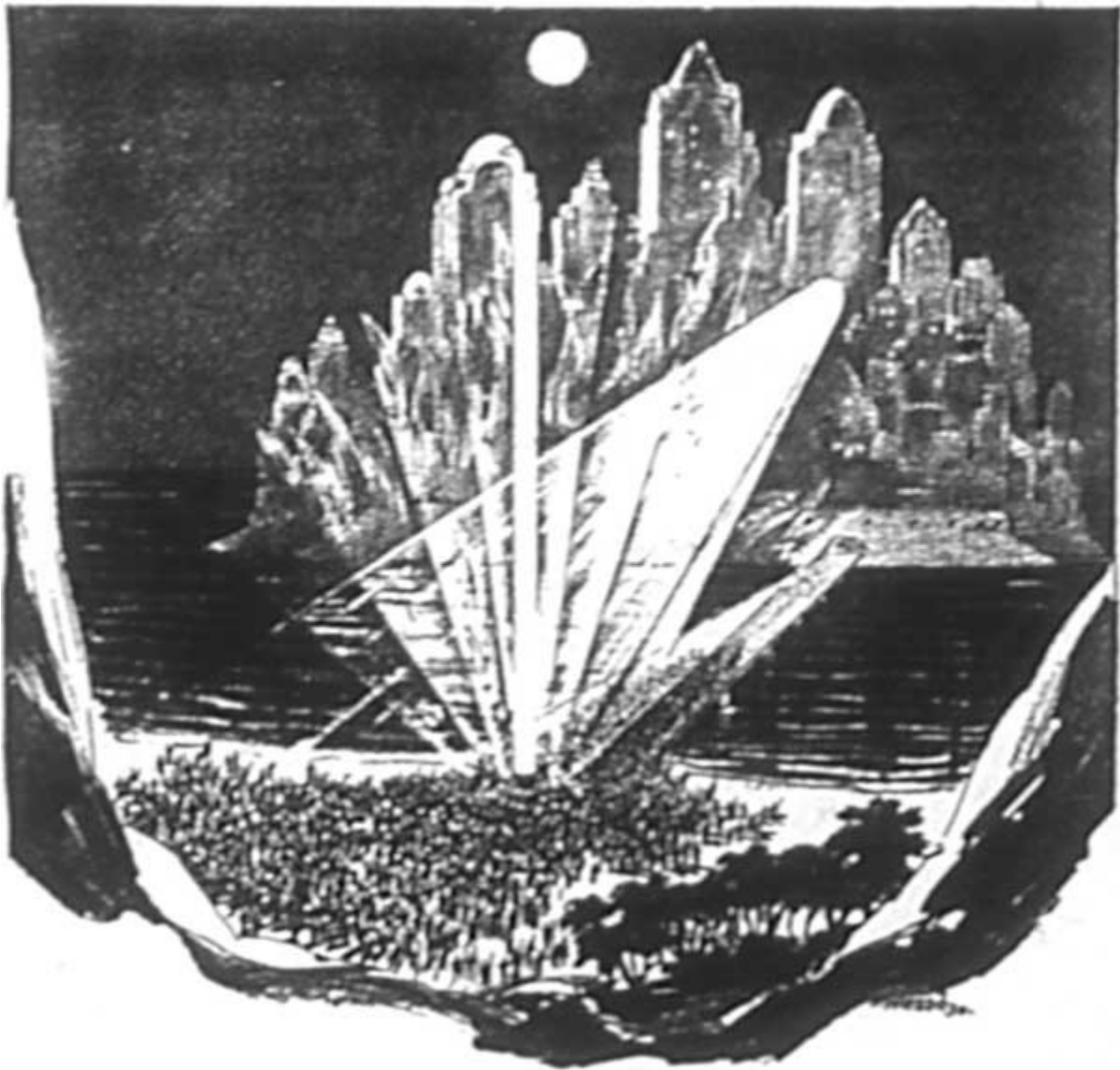
the causeway. Then all was shrouded in impenetrable darkness, save for the snow-soft city upon the island.

"What are we going to do?" chattered old Parrish. "I wish I was back in Tode's cave. He gave me food and let me help with his work sometimes. I'll die here. We'll never get away. We'll never get anywhere."

"We're safer here than anywhere else," answered Jim. "We'll have to stay till morning, or—God, look at that!"

Out of the ramparts of the city the round, blue-white disc of the Eye had suddenly disclosed itself. And simultaneously a violet flare shot up above the moving hosts of the Drilgoes in the middle of the causeway.

Out of the center of the Eye that blinding searchlight streamed. And the pillar of violet fire rose up to counter it, clove it in two, as a man cuts off the tentacle of a cuttlefish, and left it groping helplessly above the heads of the Drilgoes.



[Image description start: A black and white illustration showing the city of Atlantis in the distance, bright against the dark night sky, with the wide beam of the Eye of Atlantis shooting out over a bridge of land, hitting the ray of light shooting up out of the Atom-Smasher, while a crowd of people surrounds it. Image description end.]

To and fro wavered the blue-white beam, and like a protective wall the violet column spread and extended, till the air was interlaced with the play of the two colors. Streaks of white shot through streaks of purple and black neutral clouds twirled, swirling in ghostlike forms. It was a scene inconceivably beautiful, and it was impossible to realize what must be happening out there.

Men must be dying, withering like stubble in the blue-white flames, whenever they caught them. And yet, under that play of colors, Jim could see the vast host crawling forward to the assault.

He held his breath. It was sublime and terrible, and on the result of that conflict depended—what? What difference, when all this was forgotten history, antedating the written records of the human race?



[Image description start: A black and white illustration showing Dent, Lucille, and her father standing behind rocks, watching a bright light. Image description end.]

Then of a sudden the blue-white rays were seen to win. They were beating down the violet light. Like living fingers they pierced that protective wall, flinging it back, until only the tall central pillar remained. And then for the first time the sound of combat became audible.

A groan of despair, of defeat, of hopelessness. The black stream was recoiling, turning upon itself. In the vivid glare of the white light it could be seen dissolving, breaking into a thousand pieces, streaming back toward the land. And, as it broke, the blue-white light pursued, eating its way and blasting all it met. Atlantis had triumphed.

Another sound was audible. From the city it came, a whirring as of innumerable grasshoppers, increasing till it sounded once more like the tapping of innumerable woodpeckers. Suddenly the night broke into whirling balls of fire.

Lucille cried out. Jim leaped to his feet to see more clearly.

"It's men with wings," he cried. "Scores of them. They're hurling something at the Drilgoes!"

The clacking of the wing mechanism filled the air. Now the fugitives from the Drilgo host were streaming along the base of the mountain underneath, seeking the safety of the jungles, and

over them, riding them, harrying them, flew the Atlantean birdmen, hurling their fiery balls. And where the balls fell, conflagrations of cold fire seemed to start and run like mercury, and shrivel up everything they touched.

But the birdmen were not without casualties of their own. Here and there one could be seen to drop, and then the massed Drilgoes would turn savagely upon him with their stone-pointed spears. The fight was coming very close now. The savage cries of the Drilgoes filled the night.

A ball of fire broke hardly fifty yards away from where the three were crouching. A birdman fluttered down like a wounded hawk and lay a-sprawl just underneath the rampart of boulders. Jim surmounted them, ran down the slope of the mountainside, and bent over the dying man. He was hideously wounded by the thrust of a Drilgo spear—whether because the mechanism had failed, or because he had swooped too low, Jim could not determine. As Jim bent over him he looked up at him.

A youth in his teens, with the face and build of a Greek warrior, a worthy ancestor of European man. Jim looked at him and shuddered. "My grandfather four hundred generations removed," he thought.

Seeing that this was no Drilgo, with eyes widened by the anticipation of death, the Atlantean smiled, and died.

Jim detached the straps that held the wings to his shoulders and examined them. They were multi-hinged, built of innumerable layers of laminated wood, which seemed to have been subjected to some special treatment. In the base of each, just where it fitted to the curve of the shoulder-blade, a tiny light was burning.

Jim looped the straps about his arms and walked back to the rampart. Old Parrish saw him and screamed. Lucille cried out.

"I'm going to try to get the Atom Smasher," said Jim, pointing to the thin spire of violet flame that was still visible in the center of the causeway. "It's our only



chance. You must stay here. If I live, I'll return. If I don't return—"

But he knew that he must return. Nothing could kill him, because Lucille would be waiting for him behind that rampart of stones upon the bare, vitreous mountainside.

"I'm going to get the Atom Smasher," Jim repeated. "In these wings I'll be taken for Atlantean. I'll—bring it back." He spoke with faltering conviction. And yet there was nothing else to do. Everything depended upon his being able to bring back the Atom Smasher and take Lucille and her father away.

"I think you're right, Jim," answered Lucille. "We'll—wait here till you—come—back."

Her voice died away in a sob. Jim bent and kissed her. Then he began examining the mechanism of the wings. It did not appear difficult. A leather strap fastened around the body. Through this strap ran cords operated by levers upon the breast, and there was a knob in a groove that looked as if it controlled

the starting of the mechanism.

"I'll be back," said Jim.

And suddenly the Eye appeared again, and with it there sounded once more the whir of wings.

"Down!" shouted Jim.

He was too late. A score of birdmen shot out of the dark and hovered over them. Next moment they had descended to the ground. Lucille and Parrish were seized, and Jim, struggling furiously, quickly found himself equally helpless in their grasp.

The accents of the Atlanteans as they spoke to one another were soft and liquid, their faces were refined and gentle, but their strength was that of athletes. Jim saw Lucille and Parrish lifted into the air; next moment he himself was raised in the arms of one of the birdmen, who shot upward like an arrow and headed a course back toward the city, carrying Jim as if he had been as light as a child.

## CHAPTER 6: *Human Sacrifice*

In a great open space, flanked by temples and colonnades, the flight had come to rest. There, under the soft artificial light that made the whole city as bright as day, Jim, Lucille, and her father were set down before a sort of rostrum, on which were gathered the dignitaries of the city.

Jim's hopes were rising fast, for between the Atlanteans and the savage Drilgoes there was as much difference as between a modern American and a blackfellow from the Australian bush. These men were civilized to a degree that even modern America has not attained.

Nowhere was there a speck of dirt to be seen. Vehicles moved soundlessly along the wide streets on either side of this central meeting-place, and the whole city was roofed with glass, through which could be seen the brilliant moon and stars—invisible from the mist-filled valley without.

Soft garments of white wool clothed men and women

alike, fashioned something like togas, but cut short at the knee, leaving the lower part of the leg bare and disclosing the sandaled feet. The hair was long and flowed about the shoulders. But what struck Jim most forcibly was the look of utter gentleness and benignity upon these faces.

"I guess we've fallen into pretty good hands after all," he whispered to Parrish.

But one of the dignitaries upon the platform, an elderly man with a face reminiscent of William Jennings Bryan in his inspired moments, was leaning forward out of his curved chair and addressing the old man, and, to Jim's astonishment, Parrish was answering.

But these were not the liquid accents of the Atlanteans. The words resembled the barking of a dog, and across Jim's brain there suddenly flashed the explanation. The dignitary was speaking in the tongue of the Drilgoes, which Parrish, of course, would have learned in his five years of captivity.

Suddenly Parrish turned to Jim. "He wants to know where we come from," he said. "I've told him from a far country. He thinks we're ambassadors from some of the parts of Europe that the Atlanteans who sailed away some years ago landed at. It's no use trying to explain—they don't seem to have succeeded in inventing an Atom Smasher for themselves."

Jim nodded, and the colloquy went on and on, while the Atlanteans listened with languid interest, their kind and smiling faces seeming to exude benignity. At length the session seemed to have ended.

Parrish wore a wide grin. "Everything's coming right, dear," he told Lucille. "The old chap says we are to be the guests of the city either for a night or for a week. It's something to do with the moon, and there seems to be a full moon to-night. Some quaint superstition or other. And then I guess we'll have a chance to get away in the Atom Smasher. I've learned something of the mechanism, and it won't be hard to operate it. We've fallen into good hands."

A squad of four soldiers or policemen, with shorter

robes and what looked like truncheons in their hands, made signs to the three to accompany them. Amid mutual bows, the city's guests filled into a small court-way, closed at the further end, on which a number of Atlanteans were standing.

While Jim was wondering what the next move was to be, to his astonishment the whole courtyard began to rise slowly up the walls of the tall buildings on either side.

"An elevator!" gasped Lucille. "Now I do feel that everything is coming out all right, Jim, dear."

Jim did not question the psychology of this. He pressed her hand tenderly. Already Tode and the past were becoming a bad dream.

"Did you say anything about the Atom Smasher, Parrish?" he asked.

"No, I thought it better not to," replied the old scientist. "You see, they know it only as a force that neutralizes the blue-white ray. Best not to let them

know we're sailing for home in it."

"I think that was wise," answered Jim, and just then the rising court-way came to a stop level with the top story of the great building at one side.

Smiling courteously, the guards invited the three to precede them inside an enormous hall, supported on pillars of gleaming stone resembling alabaster. In the center was a small, low table, triangular in shape, with three of the low, curved chairs. The guards invited the three to be seated.

Almost immediately smiling servitors brought in fruits on platters of porcelain, dishes of cooked vegetables, somewhat like the modern ones, but seasoned and flavored with delicious herbs. The staple dish was something like an oval banana, but infinitely more succulent. The three fell to and made a hearty meal, which was washed down with fine wines.

"We've certainly fallen into good hands," said Jim. "All we've got to do is to lie low, and look pleasant, and it won't be long before we get an opportunity to get

hold of the Atom Smasher."

The guards, seeing that they had finished their meal, smilingly invited them to accompany them through a huge bronze door at one end of the hall. It swung back, disclosing complete darkness.

Jim felt Lucille's hand upon his arm. The girl was hesitating, and for a moment Jim hesitated too, half afraid of a fall into emptiness. Then he heard the footsteps of the guards ahead, and went on.

It was eery, moving there with the sound of feet in front of them, and, apart from that, utter silence. Then Lucille uttered a little cry.

"Jim, do you feel something pushing you?" she asked.

"There is something—" Jim swung around, but some invisible force continued to propel him forward. He moved sidewise, and the force gently corrected him. The sound of footsteps had ceased.

"What is it, Jim?" cried the girl. "Help me!"



Something's got hold of me!"

Old Parrish was struggling close beside them. Jim panted as he wrestled with the force, but his efforts were absolutely futile. Slowly, as if slid on wires, he was propelled forward, until a cushion of air seemed to block his further progress.

Dark as it was, and silent, Jim had the consciousness of other human beings about him, of a vast, unseen multitude that was watching him.

Suddenly the droning of a chant began to fill the place, as if a priest were intoning hymns. As that chant rose and fell, voices all about took up the echoing refrain. Jim tried to reach Lucille, but he could move his arm only a few inches against that resilient force pressing in on all sides of him.

Then, in an instant, a blinding, stabbing light shot through his eyeballs. He heard Lucille scream, old Parrish yelp, and, with eyelids screwed tight against the intolerable glare, fought once more desperately and ineffectively to reach Lucille's side.

Slowly Jim managed to unscrew his eyes. He began to realize that he was standing in what appeared to be an enormous amphitheatre. But high up, upon a narrow tongue of flooring that ran like a bridge from one end to the other, with Lucille on his right and Parrish on his left. Nothing visible seemed to be restraining them, and yet they were as securely held as if fastened with tight chains.

Jim's brain reeled as he looked down. Imagine a bridge about half-way up an amphitheatre of a hundred stories, the ground beneath packed with human beings no larger than ants, the whole of the vast interior lined with them, tier above tier, faces and forms increasing from pismire size below to the dimensions of the human form upon a level, and, again, fading almost to pin-points at the summit of the vast building, where the soft glow of the artificial light filtered through the glass of the roof.

He clutched at the air, felt the soft pressure of the force that was restraining him, looked at Lucille, and saw her half-unconscious with fear, leaning against it, leaning against that soft, resilient, cushionlike,

invisible substance; looked at Parrish, whom the shock had thrown into a sort of semi-catalepsy—Parrish, mouthing and staring!

He looked forward to where the tongue of flooring ended. Here, upon a stage, flanked with huge carved figures, a group was gathered. At first he was unable to discern what was being enacted there, so brilliant was the light that glared overhead.

It was the Eye, a round disc perhaps ten feet in diameter, that all-seeing Eye of Atlantis that guarded the great city, but how it worked Jim was totally unable to discover. He saw, however, that it was blinking rapidly, the alternations being so swift that it was only just possible to be conscious of them. Perhaps the Eye was opening and closing ten times a second.

Jim strained his eyes to see what was taking place on the stage at the end of the tongue on which he stood. What was it? What were they doing there? And was that the captured Atom Smasher standing between what looked like grinning idols? A group of captured

Drilgoes near it?

A shrill scream from Lucille echoed through the vast amphitheatre. Her eye had seen what Jim's had not yet seen—something that had shocked her into complete unconsciousness.

A marble figure, she stood leaning against the invisible force that kept her on her feet, and in those open, staring eyes was a look of ineffable horror.

Jim could see clearly now, for the light from the Eye was slowly diminishing in brilliancy, or else his own eyes were growing more accustomed to it. Those carved figures, forming a semi-circle upon the platform were figures of gods, squat, huge forms seeming to emerge out of the blocks of rock from which they had been fashioned.

Hideous, gruesome carvings they were, resembling some futuristic sculpture of to-day, for the artist who had fashioned them had given hardly more than a hint of the finished representation. It was rather as if the masses of rock that had been transported there had

become vitalized, foreshadowing the dim yet awful beings that were some day to emerge from them.

Only the arms were clearly sculptured, and each of the half-dozen figures squatting upon its haunches in that semi-circle had four of them. Arms that protruded so as to form an interlacing network, and the fingers were long claws fashioned of some metal. Over the arms the shapeless heads beat down with a leering look, and from each mouth protruded a curved tongue.

A masterpiece of horror, that group, like the great stone figures of the Aztecs, or some of the hideous Indian gods. Seen under the glare of the Eye, they formed a background of horrible omen. In a flash it dawned upon Jim that these hideous figures might be gods of bloody sacrifice.

"That's why these people seem so gentle," he heard himself saying. "It's the—the contrast."

He pulled himself together. Again he tried to move towards Lucille, and again that invisible force

restrained him.

Yes, it was the captured Atom Smasher upon the platform, and those forms grouped in front of the dignitaries were captured Drilgoes, a dozen or so of them. And the concealed priest was droning a chant again. Every other sound was hushed, but from each square foot of the great amphitheatre a pair of eyes was watching.

A myriad of eyes turned upon the platform! What was going to happen next?

Suddenly the priest's voice died away, and simultaneously the three dignitaries, who seemed to be officiating priests, from their solemn gestures, stepped backward, passing beneath the protruding arms of the idols. There sounded the deep whir of some mechanism somewhere, and the same invisible force that had Jim and his two companions in its control suddenly began to agitate the captive Drilgoes.

*It was shuffling them!* It was forcing them into line,

pushing here and pulling there, in spite of the Drilgoes' terrified struggles. They writhed and twisted, groaning and clicking in abject terror as they wrestled with that unseen power, and all in vain. Slowly the foremost of the Drilgoes was propelled forward, inch by inch, until he stood immediately beneath the interlacing arms.

And what happened next filled Jim with sick horror and loathing. For of a sudden the arms began to move, the iron claws cut through the air—a shriek of terror and anguish broke from the Drilgo's mouth ... and he was no longer a man, but a clawed and pulped mass of human flesh!

"Aiah! Aiah! Aiah!" broke from the throats of the assembled multitude.

The weaving arms had stopped. From behind them an attendant was gathering up what had been the Drilgo in a basket. Then the mechanism had begun again, and again that shrill cry of the spectators was ringing in Jim's ears.

Louder still rose the shriek of old Parrish as he understood. Jim put forth all his strength in a mad effort to break free. A child would have had more chance in the grip of a giant. And each time the arms of the gods revolved, the unseen force pushed Jim, Lucille, and Parrish nearer the platform.

Now Jim understood. This horrible sacrifice was a part of the religion of the Atlanteans, and he, Lucille, and Parrish, were being reserved for the final spectacle.

And at the sight of Lucille beside him, stonily unconscious, and yet standing, and moving like a mechanical doll, in little forward jerks—at the sight of the girl, hardly six feet distant, and yet utterly beyond the touch of his finger-tips, Jim went mad. He would not shout; he closed his lips in pride of race, pride of that civilization that he had left twelve thousand years ahead of him. Not like the shrieking Drilgoes on the platform, howling as each of them in turn was forced into that maze of revolving knives. But he fought as a madman fights. He hammered at the resilient air, while the sweat ran down his face, he braced his feet



upon the wooden tongue, and sought to stay his forward progress. And all the while that infernal force moved him steadily onward.

He was on the platform now. He was traveling the same route that the Drilgoes had taken. The unseen force was shuffling him, Lucille, and Parrish, pushing and pulling them. And, despite Jim's efforts, it was Lucille who was first of the three ... and Jim second ... and old Parrish third....

Jim heard Parrish's hoarse whisper behind him, "Death! Death! The uranium!" He was fumbling at his breast, but the significance of the words and gestures escaped him. He was staring ahead. Only three living Drilgoes of the whole number of prisoners remained alive, and suddenly it was borne in upon Jim that he knew the last of the three.

It was the Drilgo, Cain, who had been their companion in the Atom Smasher—there, not a dozen feet distant. Cain, his bestial face, with the ridged eyebrows and great jaws convulsed with terror and dripping sweat. Cain, immediately in front of Lucille.

"God, let her not wake! Let her never know!" Jim breathed. The agony would be but momentary. And there was nothing a man could not endure if he must. He could even endure to see Lucille become—what the Drilgoes had become. It would soon be over now.

The Eye was blinking overhead. The hideous stone faces of the Atlantean gods looked down in leering mockery. Another of the Drilgoes had gone the same route as the others. Cain was the second now, Lucille the third victim, and he, Jim, would be the fourth.

Gritting his teeth, Jim saw the next Drilgo propelled forward into the whirling knives. He saw the man fling up his arms, as if to shield his head—and then he was a man no longer, and the horrible knives revolved, and "Aiah! Aiah! Aiah!" cried the multitude.

Once more the mechanism whirred.... Once more the arms revolved. A howl of terror broke from Cain's lips as he was propelled onward....

Then suddenly the whirring stopped. The arms of the stone gods, with their hooked, razorlike claws, to

which clung particles of flesh, were arrested in mid-air. Cain, unharmed, was leaning backward, his features set in a mask of awful fear.

Simultaneously Jim knew that the force which had held him in thrall was gone. He flung his arms out. He was free. He grasped Lucille, held her tightly against his breast, stood there drawing great, labored breaths, waiting—for what?

A film was creeping over his eyes, but he was aware that the Eye had suddenly gone out. And out of the dark the priest was chanting.

Then came a deep-drawn sigh from the spectators, followed by a ringing shout. In place of the Eye the full moon appeared, sailing overhead. And, holding off that deathly weakness, Jim understood. The sacrifice had ended; a new month had begun....

## **CHAPTER 7: *Back to Long Island***

Jim, seated beside Lucille, was listening to Cain's gruntings and chucklings as he expounded the

situation to old Parrish.

It was the day following the scene in the amphitheatre. The four had been escorted back along the tongue of flooring into a hall with walls of fretted stone and sumptuous colorings. The floor was strewn with rich rugs woven of some vegetable fibre. There were divans and low chairs. At brief intervals, servitors, always smiling, passed carrying trays with wines and foods. And in the corridors were always glimpses of the guards.

"It was the rising of the full moon saved our lives, Dent," Parrish explained. "It appears they have this sacrifice at each of the moon's phases. The victims, captives or criminals, are eaten by the priests. We've got a week's respite, Dent, and then—God help us."

Jim's arm tightened about Lucille, but the girl turned and smiled into his face. There was no longer any fear there. And Jim swore to himself that he would yet find some way of outwitting their devilish captors.

"What the devil are we supposed to be, criminals or

what?" he asked her father. "Why do they smile at us all the time in that confounded way?"

Parrish questioned the Drilgo, but apparently he was unable to explain himself to him. "Maybe they think it an honor for us, Dent," he answered, "or maybe it's their idea of etiquette. Anyway, we four are to head the list when the moon's at the three-quarters. God, if only we could reach the Atom Smasher, I'm certain I could find out how it works!"

Jim had tried more than once to reach it. Through the colonnades at the end of the hall he could see the mechanism standing on the platform, always being inspected by half a dozen or so of the dignitaries of Atlantis. But all his attempts to cross that tongue of flooring had been vetoed by the guards.

They had presented their hands to him, palms outward, and on the palms were fine steel points, about two inches long, set into leather gauntlets. It had been impossible to try conclusions with them.

Two days went by. Once a group of dignitaries had

entered the hall and, with smiles and profuse bows, inspected the prisoners. Then they had departed. And Jim had paced the floor, to and fro, thinking desperately.

There was no sort of weapon with which to hazard an attack. Jim knew that they were under the closest observation. He could only wait and hope. And if all else failed, he meant to hurl himself, with Lucille in his arms, off the tongue of floor into the depths below when their time came.

On the third morning, after a troubled sleep induced by very weariness, Jim was awakened by one of the guards, and started up to see one of the bowing dignitaries before him, and Parrish and Lucille sitting up among their rugs.

Bowing repeatedly, the smiling old man addressed some words to Jim, and then turned to Parrish.

"He says he wants you to show him the way the Atom Smasher works," said Parrish. "Now's our chance, Dent. He thinks it's simply an apparatus for

neutralizing the blue-white ray. Don't let him guess—"

"I won't let him guess," Jim answered. "Tell him we'll go and show him—"

"I've told him, and he says only you are to go. He's suspicious. Say something quickly, Dent."

"Tell him," said Jim, "that I must have my two assistants and the lady. Tell him I may also need the help of some of his people. It requires many men to operate the machine."

Parrish translated, speaking in the Drilgo tongue, which was their only means of communication. The Atlantean considered. Then he spoke again.

"He says that we three men may go, but Lucille must be left behind," groaned Parrish.

"The answer is no," said Jim.

The old dignitary, who seemed somewhat crestfallen, departed with an expressive gesture. Jim and Parrish

looked at each other.

"That's our end," groaned Parrish.

"No, he'll bite," answered Jim, with the first grin that had appeared on his countenance since their arrival.

"Let's make our plans quickly. We must contrive to get Lucille inside the machine, under the pretense of assisting with the mechanism. And Cain, of course," he added, glancing at the goggly-eyed Drilgo. "You do your best to locate the starting mechanism, Parrish, and signal me the moment you're ready. We'll both leap in, and the four of us will sail—God, I don't care where we sail to, so long as we get away from here! Into eternity, if need be. But I hope it's Long Island!"

Back came the dignitary with two of the guards. Smiling at Jim, he indicated by signs that the three others might accompany him. The Atlanteans had bitten, as Jim had forecast.

The four proceeded along the hall and over the tongue of flooring. This time the force that had previously controlled their movements was not in



action. At the farther end of the bridge they saw the group of dignitaries gathered about the Atom Smasher, examining it curiously. Over their heads the hooked arms of the hideous gods were raised. The Eye was darkened, as if with a curtain, and through the glass roof, high overhead, the sunlight streamed down upon the empty amphitheatre.

In spite of their smiles, the dignitaries of Atlantis were very much on the alert, as their tense attitudes denoted. Two more guards had appeared, and Jim saw that they were uncovering some apparatus at the base of the Eye. They were swinging a camera-like object toward him, its lens focused upon the Atom Smasher. It was not difficult to understand what was in the minds of the Atlanteans. The dignitaries were uneasy and mistrustful, and at the first suspicion of treachery they meant to loose the blue-white Ray contained in the apparatus, and blow the Atom Smasher and the group about it to destruction.

Jim intercepted a sign from Parrish, indicating that he was to make pretense of assisting him. He bent over the machine, Lucille beside him. Parrish was busily

examining the wheels and levers. He was adjusting the thumbscrews, moving the needles along the dials.

One of the Atlanteans spoke, and Cain translated into "Drilgo" for Parrish's benefit. Parrish answered. Then, without raising his head, the old man said quietly, "I've located the starting lever, Dent. You and Lucille get inside quickly and pretend you're doing something to the machinery."

They stepped over the bow of the boat and stood beside Parrish, who continued examining the wheels. "We mustn't forget Cain," whispered the girl to her father. "Oh, I hope he understands!"

But there was no direct evidence that Cain did understand, and Parrish dared not warn him in "Drilgo," for fear one of the Atlanteans might understand the language. Cain was standing close beside the boat. But he was not in the boat.

Again one of the Atlanteans shot a question at Parrish. Parrish beckoned to Cain, and awaited the translation. He answered.

Each moment was growing tenser. It was impossible that the Atlanteans could fail to understand what was being planned. The only saving chance was that they did not realize the possibilities of escape that the vessel offered. A full minute went by.

Suddenly Parrish raised his head. "I've got it fixed, I think, Dent," he said. "I'm going to count. When I reach 'three,' seize Cain and pull him aboard."

Jim nodded. The uneasiness was increasing. The guards at the camera-like object were each holding some sort of mechanical accessory in their hands. It looked like a small sphere of glass, and it connected with the apparatus by means of a hollow tube of fibre. Jim guessed that in an instant the Ray could be made to dart out of the lens. It would be quick work—as nearly as possible instantaneous work.

"Ready, Dent?" asked Parrish in an even voice. In this crisis the old man had become astonishingly calm. He seemed the calmest of the lot. "One!"

Jim beckoned to Cain, who came toward him, his eyes

goggling in inquiry.

"Two!"

Jim reached out and took Cain by the arm. There was a sharp question from the Atlantean who had spoken before.

"Three!"

With all his force Jim yanked Cain over the edge of the boat. The Drilgo stumbled and fell headlong with a howl of terror. But headlong—inside.

What happened was practically instantaneous. A sudden whir of the mechanism, a violet glow from the funnel, the smell of chlorine—a flash of blinding blue-white light. The Atlantean guards had fired—a quarter-second too late!

The thump, thump of the electrical discharge died away. The four were in the boat, whirling away through space. Cain was rising to his knees, a woe-begone expression on his face. And there was a clean

cut, with charred, black edges along one side of the boat, showing how near the Atlanteans had come to success.

The relief, after the hideous suspense of the past days, was almost too much for the three white people. "We're free, we're going back home!" cried Jim exultantly, as he caught Lucille in his arms. And she surrendered her lips to his, while the tears streamed down her checks. Old Parrish, at the instrument board, looked up, smiling and chuckling. Even Cain, understanding that they were not to be hacked to bits with knives, gurgled and grinned all over his black face.

"How long will it take us to get back?" Jim asked Parrish after a while.

"I—I'm not quite sure, my boy," the old man replied. "You see—I haven't quite familiarized myself with the machine as yet."

"But we'll get back all right?" asked Jim.

"Well, we—we're headed in the right direction," answered Parrish. "You see, my boy, it's rather an intricate table of logarithmic calculations that that scoundrel has pasted on this board. The great danger appears to be that of coming within the orbit of the giant planet Jupiter. Of course, I'm trying to keep within the orbit of the Earth, but there is a danger of being deflected onto Pallas, Ceres, or one of the smaller asteroids, and finding ourselves upon a rock in space."

Jim and Lucille looked at Parrish in consternation. "But you don't have to leave the Earth, do you?" Jim asked.

"Unfortunately, it's pretty hard sticking to the Earth, my lad," said Parrish. "You see, Earth has moved a good many million miles through space since the time of Atlantis."

But both Jim and Lucille noticed that Parrish was already speaking of Atlantis as if it was in the past. They drew a hopeful augury from that. And then there was nothing to do but resign themselves to that

universal greyness—and to hope.

They noticed that Cain seemed to be watching Parrish's movements with unusual interest. The Neanderthal man seemed fascinated by the play of the dials, the whir of the wheels and gyroscopes.

"Are you setting a course, dad?" asked Lucille presently. "I mean, do you know just where we are?"

"To tell you the truth, my dear," answered her father, "I don't. I'm relying on some markings that Tode made on the chart—certain combinations of figures. God only knows where they'll take us to. But I'm hoping that by following them we shall find ourselves back on Long Island in the year 1930.

"No, that rascal could hardly have written down those figures to no purpose. They seem to me to comprise a course, both going and returning. But the calculations are very intricate, especially in the *time* dimension. I've nearly reached the last row now. Then, we shall have arrived, or—we sha'n't."

Jim and Lucille sat down again. There was nothing that they could do. But somehow their hopes of reaching Long Island in the year of grace 1930 had grown exceedingly slim. Everything depended upon whether or not Tode had meant those figures to represent the course back to the starting point or not.

A desperate hope—that was all that remained to them. They watched Parrish as his eyes wandered along the rows of figures, while his fingers moved the micrometer screws. And then he looked up.

"We're reaching the end of our course," he said.

"We're going to land somewhere. God knows where it will be. We must hope—that's all that's left us."

His hands dropped from the dials. He pressed a lever. The blur of nights and days began to slow. A column of vivid violet light shot from the funnel.

"Grip tight!" shouted Parrish.

Thump, thump! The Atom Smasher was vibrating violently. A jar threw Jim against Lucille. It was



coming to a standstill. Trees appeared. Jim uttered a shout. He stepped across to Parrish and wrung his hand. He put his arms about Lucille and kissed her.

They were back at the Vanishing Place, and all their sufferings seemed to be of the past....

#### **CHAPTER 8: *A Fruitless Journey***

"Why don't you stop the boat, Parrish?"

"I'm trying to, lad!"

The Atom Smasher was still vibrating, even more violently than before. A column of violet light was pouring from her funnel. The pool, the mud, the walls of heaped up water were discernible, but all quivering and reproduced, line after line, to infinity. It was like looking into the rear-view mirror of a car that is vibrating rapidly. It was like one of those Cubist paintings of a woman descending the stairs, where one had to puzzle out which is the woman and which is the stairs.

A dreadful thought shot through Jim's mind. He remembered what he had said to Tode: "You can't hold the boat still in four-dimensional space."

This was not quite the same. By stopping the infernal mechanism, one re-entered three-dimensional space, and landed. Certainly the Atom Smasher could land. They were not like the motorcyclist who got on a machine for the first time, and rode to the admiration of all who saw him, except that he couldn't find out how to stop.

Yet there was Parrish still fumbling with the controls, and the boat was still vibrating at a terrific rate of speed. It is impossible to dream of leaping out, for there was no solidity, no continuity in the scenery outside.

It was not like attempting to leap from a moving train, for instance. In that case one knows that there is solid earth beneath, however hard one lands. Here everything was distorted, a sort of mirror reflection. And Jim noticed a strange thing that had never occurred to him before. Everything was reversed, as

in a mirror picture. That clump of trees, for instance, which should have been on the right, was on the left.

Parrish looked up. "There's some means of stopping her, of course," he said. "There must be a lever—but I don't know where to look for it in all this mess." He pointed to the revolving wheels. No, it might be a matter of days of experimenting in order to discover the elusive switch.

"It may be a combination of switches," said Parrish. "I don't know what we're going to do."

"Suppose I jumped and chanced it," Jim suggested.

Lucille caught his arm with a little cry. Parrish shook his head.

"That devil—Listen: there was a Drilgo he disliked. He threw him out of the boat just before she landed at the cave. Everything was in plain sight, plainer than things are here. But he was never seen again. For God's sake, lad, sit still. I'll try—"

Hours later Parrish was still trying. And gradually Jim and Lucille had ceased to hope.

Side by side they had sat, watching that glimmering scene about them. Sometimes everything receded into a blur, across which sunlight and shadow, and then moonlight raced, at others the surroundings were so clear that it almost seemed as if, by steadying the boat, they could leap ashore. And once there happened something that sent a thrill of cold fear through both of them.

For where the pool had been there appeared suddenly a hut—and Tode, standing in the doorway, looking about him, a malicious sneer curving his lips.

Jim leaped to his feet, and old Parrish, who had seen Tode too, sprang up in wild excitement.

"Sit down, lad," he shouted. "It's nothing. I—I turned the micrometer screw a trifle hard. I got us back to five years ago, when we were living here with Tode. That's just a picture—out of the past, Jim!"

Jim understood, but he sank down again with cold sweat bathing his forehead. The terrific powers of the Atom Smasher were unveiling themselves more and more each moment. Jim felt Lucille's hand on his arm. He looked into her face.

"Jim, darling, what's going to happen to us if dad can't find how to work the machine?"

"I don't know, dear. I've thought that we might all jump out and chance it. If we held each other tight, we'd probably land in the same place—"

Old Parrish stood up. "I can't work it, Jim," he said. "Tode's got us beat. There's only one thing for us to do. You can guess what it is."

"I think I can," said Jim, glancing askance at Lucille. Yes, he knew, but he lacked the heart to tell her. "If we were all to jump out, tied together—don't you think we might land—somewhere near where we want to land?" he asked.

"Jim, do you realize what each vibration of this boat

means?" asked Parrish. "There's a table on the instrument-board. It's a wave length of four thousand miles in space and nineteen years in time."

"You mean we're moving to London or San Francisco and back—"

"Further than that, every infinite fraction of a second," answered Parrish. "No, Jim, we—we wouldn't land. So we must just go back to where we came from, and—"

He had been speaking in a low voice, calculated not to reach Lucille's ears. The girl had been leaning back, her eyes closed, as if half asleep. Now she rose and stepped up to her father and lover. "You can tell me the truth," she said. "I'm not afraid."

"We've got to go back, Lucille," answered her father. "It's our only chance. By following the course in reverse we can expect to make Atlantis again—"

"Back to that horrible place?"

"No, my dear. The chart will lead us, obviously, back to the cave where Tode has his headquarters. We must try to surprise him, and force him to bring us back to Long Island."

"And then?" asked Lucille.

Parrish shrugged his shoulders. "We'll face that problem when we come to it," he answered.

"But how do you expect to be able to land at the other end any more than this?" asked Jim. "Suppose the machine continues to vibrate instead of coming to a standstill?"

"I think," said Parrish, "that we'll be able to strike a bargain with Tode. Obviously he will be willing to bring the machine to a standstill in order to parley with us. We'll make terms—the best we can. After all, he can't afford to remain marooned on the isle of Atlantis without the Atom Smasher."

"I hate the idea of bargaining with that wretch," said Lucille.

"So do we all, dear," answered Jim. "But there's nothing else that we can do. It's just a matter of give and take. And I'd be glad to consent to any terms that would bring us three safe back to earth, with all this business behind us."

"I'll start back, then," said Parrish, turning back to the instrument board.

And, to the familiar thump, thump of the electrical discharge, the Atom Smasher took up its backward journey once more.

A long time passed. With her head resting against Jim's breast, Lucille rested. Jim bent over her, trying to discover whether she was asleep or not. Her eyes were closed, her breathing so soft that she hardly seemed alive. An infinite pity for the girl filled Jim's heart, and, mingled with it, the intense determination to overcome the madman who had subjected her to these perils. He glanced across at Parrish, fingering his screws. Old Parrish looked up and nodded. There was a new determination in the old man's face that made him a different person from the crazed old man



whom Jim had encountered at the Vanishing Place.

"We can beat him, Parrish!" Jim called, and Parrish looked back and nodded again. "We're nearly back to the top of the column," he answered.

Not long afterward Parrish looked up once more.

"Stand by, Jim!" he called. "And be ready. Tode will be aware of our approach by means of the sensitive instruments he keeps in his laboratory. But don't harm him. We want him aboard, and we want him badly. He won't be able to play any more tricks with us. I've learned too much about the Atom Smasher."

He pressed a lever, and the greyness dissolved into its component parts of light and darkness. A jar. Thump, thump! The violet light! Lucille looked up, raised herself, uttered a low cry and caught at Jim's arm, trembling.

They had run their course truly. The Atom Smasher was vibrating outside the entrance to Tode's cave. And that was Tode, standing there, watching them, that devilish grin of his accentuated to the utmost. A

blurred figure that appeared and vanished, and a surrounding crowd of Drilgoes—how many it was impossible to guess, for they looked like a crowd of apes in motion.

Suddenly Tode disappeared, and a moment later Lucille uttered a terrified cry as his voice spoke in her ear:

"I thought you'd be back. I knew you'd got away from Atlantis when my recorder showed the waves of electrical energy proceeding from the city. You were clever, Dent, but you see, you had to come back to me to get my help."

"Don't be afraid, dear," said Jim, trying to soothe the girl. "That's a wireless receiving apparatus." He pointed to a sort of cabinet enclosed among the rotating wheels, and then it was evident that Tode's voice was proceeding from it.

Tode's figure appeared again, dancing through a haze of lines and patches. He was holding something in his hand which Jim made out to be the mouthpiece of a

microphone. The voice inside the Atom Smasher spoke again:

"Turn all the micrometer screws until the needles register zero, Parrish. Then turn Dial D to point 3, Dial C to 5, Dial B to 1, and Dial A to 2. I'll repeat.... Now press the starting lever, Parrish, and you'll find yourself on firm ground again."

A few moments later the Atom Smasher was pouring out an immense column of the violet light, and slowly the vibration ceased. The blurred forms of Tode, of the Drilgoes grew clear. They had arrived.

Tode stepped over the rail. "And now, my friends, we'll have a talk," he said.

"No tricks, Tode," Jim warned him, "You've probably got a number of deviltries up your sleeve—"

"One or two, Dent," grinned Tode.

"We're willing to negotiate."

"Of course you are. You see, I hold the trumps, Dent. Those dial deflections, which are inevitable in the construction of any piece of mechanism, are not the same for Earth in 1920. Don't think you can use the same figures to land with. You must remember that there has been a precession of the equinoxes since the time of Atlantis, with a consequent shift in the earth's axis. No, Dent, I've got you very much where I want you. But I'm willing to discuss terms with you. First of all, let's get rid of this useless cargo. I don't believe in overburdening a ship," he grinned.

He picked up Cain bodily and heaved the astonished Drilgo over the side before he knew what was happening to him. Cain picked himself up and rubbed his sides, whimpering mournfully. The Drilgoes crowded closer, their faces agape with astonishment. Tode spoke a command sharply, and they scattered.

"Before we come to terms, Dent, I'll give you a piece of news that may interest you," said Tode. "Much has happened during the time you've been away. Ambassadors have been out to see me from Atlantis. With the aid of a Drilgo interpreter, they conveyed to

me that they had been greatly impressed by the disappearance of the Atom Smasher. They have nothing like it, of course, and they think I'm a Number One magician.

"The upshot is, they want me to accept the supreme rule of the city, and use my arts to restore the lost territory that has sunk beneath the waves. They swore on an image of their god, Cruk, that they were sincere. I told them that I'd sent the Atom Smasher away on a journey, but that it would be back shortly, and that I'd then give them their answer.

"Now, Dent"—Tode's face took on that look of fanaticism that Jim had seen on it before—"I'm going to repeat the proposition I made to you before. Join me. I'll make you my chief subordinate, and I'll load you and Parrish down with honors. Everything that a human being can desire shall be yours. And in a year or two, when we're tired of being gods, we'll take the Atom Smasher back to Earth and destroy it, and with our wealth we'll become the supreme rulers of Earth too. I need you, Dent. You don't realize how lonely life can be when one is worshiped as a god. As for Lucille,

there are a thousand maidens more beautiful than she is, in Atlantis. Come, Dent, your answer! Your last chance, Dent! Don't throw it away!"

He read the answer before Jim could speak it. Jim saw Tode's face flicker, and hurled himself upon him. Lucille screamed. The two men wrestled together in the narrow confines of the circular boat. Jim struck Tode a blow that sent him reeling against the rail. Then he felt himself seized from behind. A giant Drilgo had him in his arms. He lifted him over the side and flung him to the earth. In an instant the chattering Drilgoes were crowding down upon him.

Struggling madly, Jim saw Tode fell old Parrish with a blow, push back Lucille as she sprang at him, and quickly press the starting lever. The column of violet fire faded, there came the whirl of the mechanism—the Atom Smasher vanished....

## **CHAPTER 9: *The Blinded Eye***

Jim fought with all his strength; he managed to shake off his assailants and regain his feet. Then one of the

Drilgoes poised his stone-tipped spear, ready to hurl it through his body.

But the spear never left the Drilgo's hand in Jim's direction. Like a great black ape, Cain leaped upon the fellow and bore him to the ground, his feet twined around his shoulders, his hands gripping his throat. Not until the Drilgo had been reduced to a heaving, half-strangled hulk did Cain leave him.

Then Cain, bending until his stomach almost touched the ground, came worming toward Jim, making signs of obeisance.

What had happened that Jim had won the Drilgo's faith? Why did Cain now look upon him, apparently, as his master? It was impossible to gauge the processes of the black man's mind, and at the moment Jim was in no mood to wonder. The stunning disaster that had overtaken him monopolized his thoughts.

Lucille and Parrish were once more in Tode's power. That was the dominating fact. The only gleam of comfort in the situation was that Tode had given him

the clue to his movements.

Beyond a doubt Tode had taken his captives into Atlantis with him. It was impossible to disbelieve Tode's statement that he had been offered the supreme power in the city. Tode's egotism would have compelled him to blurt out that fact. Besides, Tode had certainly not gone back to earth.

Jim must force his way into Atlantis. He would find and rescue the two prisoners or die there.

He turned away from the groveling Cain and the chattering Drilgoes, who, inspired by Cain's example, now seemed animated by the same instinct to obey him, and went into the cave. But at the entrance he turned for a moment and looked back.

It was night. The valley was swathed in mists, the volcano opposite was spouting a shaft of lurid fire. On the water was a path of moonlight, where the clouds had been dispersed by the Atlanteans. Jim took in the scene, he raised one arm and shook his fist. Then, without a word, he passed inside.



There was a soft light in the cave, streaming out from an inner chamber, access to which was through a narrow orifice in the rock. Jim passed through, and found himself in Tode's laboratory.

He was astonished at its completeness, still more so at the existence of numerous pieces of apparatus whose purpose it was difficult to understand. There was a radio transmitter and receiver, but improved out of all recognition from those in use in the prosaic year 1930. Three or four tiny dynamos, little more than toys in appearance, were generating as much voltage, from the indicators, as a modern power station. And overhead was a dial, with two series of figures in black and red, and two needles, both of which were swinging briskly, indicating that there was an intense electrical disturbance in the vicinity.

The Atom Smasher! Jim took heart. Tode could not be far away! He looked about him, subconsciously trying to discover some implement that would prove of service to him, but there was nothing that he could see, not even one of the ray tubes. He looked about uneasily.

Then his eyes fell upon something so singularly out of place that it looked, for the moment, like some pre-historic weapon. It was the last thing Jim would have expected to find there—nothing more nor less than a sporting rifle!

Deer shooting had been one of Tode's pastimes in the old days, and more than one fat buck had been surreptitiously shot for the benefit of the larder at the Vanishing Place. There was something almost pathetic in the sight of that rifle and the fifty cartridges in their cardboard carton. Perhaps Tode had pictured himself shooting big game in Atlantis at some period or other. It was a human weakness that for an instant lessened Jim's hate and horror of the man. It brought him to a saner view of the situation. Jim had been on the point of losing his powers of reason. The sight of the rifle restored them.

He turned sharply as he heard a sound in the entrance. Cain was coming toward him, with many genuflexions, and much stomach wriggling. He stopped, straightened himself. There was a look of singular intelligence on the Drilgo's face.

He began chattering, pointing in the direction of Atlantis. Jim could make nothing of what he was trying to convey.

"Yes, they're there," he said bitterly, "but I don't see how that's going to help me."

"Oh my poor Lucille!" said Cain unexpectedly.

The words were like a parrot's speech, the intonation so remarkable a copy of old Parrish's that Jim was flabbergasted. Nevertheless it was evident that Cain knew he was referring to Lucille.

With a strange, slinking motion he crossed the laboratory and bent beneath a huge slab of stone, resting on two great hewn rocks. He emerged, holding in his arms two curious contrivances. He laid them at Jim's feet.

Jim stared at them, and suddenly understood what they were. They were two pairs of wings, of the kind the Atlanteans had used when they made their aerial sortie against the Drilgoes.

Cain picked up one pair and began adjusting it about his body. He made fluttering movements with his arms.

"You mean that you've learned how to fly, you black imp of Satan?" shouted Jim.

And Cain, as if understanding, nodded and beamed all over his black face.

With that Jim's idea was born. If the Drilgoes would follow him, he would lead them against Atlantis. And, before the assault began, he would fly to the great Eye that guarded it, and blind it.

He thought afterward that it was like a supernatural revelation, this scheme, that leaped full-fledged into his brain. And Cain had developed extraordinary executive ability. Outside the cave, through rifts in the swirls of fog, Jim could see innumerable Drilgoes massing in the valley, as if they understood Jim's purpose. From Cain's gesticulations, and the number of times he rubbed his stomach, it was evident that he counted upon sacking Atlantis and was imagining

innumerable meals of fat captives.

Each flash of lurid light from the volcano disclosed further masses of Drilgoes, armed with their stone spears, apparently assembling for the attack.

Whether Tode had summoned them before the Atlanteans offered him the rulership of the city, or whether Jim's own plan had been communicated to them by some telepathic process, it was impossible to guess, but there was not the least doubt but that they were prepared to follow him.

Cain nudged Jim and began strapping the other pair of wings about his body. Jim saw that the energy was supplied by two tiny, lights burning in the base, cold fire, stored energy whose strength he did not guess. For, when Cain took him by the hand, and motioned to him to slide the knob in the groove, he was hurled skyward like a rocket.

There followed a delirious hour. Tossing and tumbling like a pigeon in a gale, Jim by degrees acquired mastery over the apparatus. At the end of the hour he could fly almost as well as Cain, who, like a black

guardian angel kept beside him, reaching out a hand when he overbalanced, and pulling him out of aerial side-slips.

Suddenly Cain motioned toward the volcano, and started toward it in a rocketlike swoop. Jim understood. The Drilgoes were ready for the attack upon Atlantis.

Jim dropped to earth, ran back into the cave, and picked up the rifle and the carton of ammunition. He filled the magazine, and, with the rifle on his arm, rose into the air again. Cain was circling back, uttering weird cries of distress at finding his master absent.

"It's all right, Cain," said Jim. "I'm here."

Side by side they flew steadily toward the base of the great cone, which was pouring out a fan-shaped stream of fire. Rumbblings shook the earth; it was evident that another upheaval was in course of preparation. The long column of the Drilgoes could be seen, extending around the flank of the mountain.

Then of a sudden the Eye opened. And across the causeway came the blue-white Ray, carrying death and destruction.

The Drilgoes, who had learned wisdom, remained concealed out of the Ray's path, and escaped, but a great dinosaur, fifty or sixty feet in length, startled by the light, came blundering out of the ferns, uttered a bellow, and melted into an amorphous mass. Birds dropped from their roosting places with a sound like that of falling hail. Black paths were cloven through the midst of the jungle.

Rifle in hand, Jim soared into the air, and shot forward, high above the causeway toward the glowing Eye.

He had noticed that the blue-white ray appeared in cycles of about two minutes, and had made his plans accordingly. Two minutes in which to accomplish his task, or take the chance of a hideous death. Some thirty seconds carried him right into the glowing heart of the winking Eye: he hovered and raised his rifle.

Underneath him the breakers thundered: round the Eye a myriad sea-birds fluttered, dashing themselves against it, falling into the waves. Huge and high the great city towered into the skies, lit by its soft incandescence. Jim could see the throngs in the streets, the traffic. But what was happening in the other side of the Eye?

Suddenly he saw the moon in her third quarter sailing through the skies, and a hideous fear overcame him. Suppose Tode had met with treachery; suppose that this very night Lucille were doomed to be sacrificed to the terrible god Cruk!

Suppose that even at that moment her tender flesh were being sacrificed by the awful hooks!

He drew a bead upon the Eye and fired—and missed. The bullet went wide. But even if it struck, what guarantee had he that it would shatter the glass, or whatever substance it was that covered the orb?

He lost position, and knew that the two-minute interval was drawing to a close. He soared and fired



again. The Eye still glowed.

Then of a sudden a blinding ray shot forth from it, so dazzling that it seemed to sear Jim's eyeballs. The interval was ended.

It shot beneath him, but no more than a few feet, and turning his eyes shoreward, Jim saw it sweep along the causeway and tear a black path through the forest. Frantically he soared, and circled around the temple.

The ray went out. Two minutes more. And now the temporary panic had passed; Jim's nerves grew steady as a rock. He eased the controls and floated in toward the glowing orb. Sea-mews, screaming, dashed themselves against it and fell, wounded and broken, into the breaking seas below. They fluttered past Jim's face, one impacted against his chest with a thud that rocked him where he hovered.

But Jim knew that he could not fail. At a distance of fifty feet he drew a bead upon the centre of the Eye and pressed the trigger.

And instantly the light went out....

#### **CHAPTER 10: *The Fight in the Dark***

He dropped down softly to the causeway. Within the city he heard a sound such as he had never heard before, as if some ancient prophecy of doom had been fulfilled, a wailing "Aiah! Aiah! Aiah!" that was caught up from throat to throat and rose upon the wind in a clamor wild and mournful as that of the sea-birds around the broken Eye. It was the death-keening of proud Atlantis, Queen of the Atlantic for fifty thousand years. She was dying in darkness.

For, with the blinding of the Eye, all the soft lights within the city had gone out. Dense, utter, impenetrable darkness reigned, and even the gibbous moon, floating overhead, seemed to give no light.

Jim dropped to the causeway and began running in the direction of the city. But, feeling the drag of his wings, he unbuckled the strap and flung them away. He might need them, but his one thought was to get to Lucille, if she were still alive. And he felt that each

moment lost might mean that he would be too late.

Through the blackness he raced forward, hearing that sobbing ululation within the walls. But behind him he heard another sound, and shuddered at it, all his hopes suddenly reversed. For that sound was the shouting of the Drilgoes as they rushed forward to conquest. And now it seemed a monstrous thing that proud Atlantis should be at the mercy of these hordes. He had let loose destruction upon the world. But it was to save Lucille.

That was his consolation. Yet he hardly checked the racing thoughts within his mind even for a moment, to meditate on what he had done. Those thoughts were all of Lucille. He must get to her before the Drilgoes entered. And he ran faster, panting, gasping, till of a sudden the portals loomed before him, and he saw a crowd of frenzied Atlanteans struggling to pass through, and a file of soldiers struggling to keep them back.

He could distinguish nothing more than the confused struggle. He hurled himself into the midst of the

crowd and swept it back. He was within the walls now, and struggling to pass through the mob of people that was swarming like homeless bees.

He fought them with flailing fists, he clove a pathway through them, until he found himself in a great shadowy space that he recognized as the central assembly of the city. More by instinct than design he hit upon the narrow court that was the elevator. But the court was filled with another mob of struggling people, and in the darkness there was no possibility of discovering the secret of raising it.

He blundered about, raging, forcing a path now here, now there. He ran into blind alleys, into small threading streets about the court, which led him back into the central place of assembly. It was like a nightmare, that blind search under the pale three-quarter moon and the black, star-blotched sky.

Suddenly Jim found himself wedged by the pressure of the crowd into a sort of recess leading off the elevator court. So strong was the pressure here that he was unable to move an inch. Wedged bolt upright,

he could only wait and let the frenzied mob stream past him. And louder above the sound of wailing came the roars of the Drilgoes swarming along the causeway.

Suddenly something gave behind him—a door, as it seemed, broken off its hinges by the mob pressure. Jim was hurled backward, and fell heavily down a flight of stone stairs, bringing up against a stone balustrade. He got up, unconscious of his bruises, ran to the top of the flight, and saw the dim square of palest twilight where the door had been.

But over him he could faintly see the stairs and the balustrade, winding away to what seemed immeasurable height. That stairway must lead to the top of the building, and thence there should be some access to the amphitheatre. Jim turned toward it.

Suddenly a tremendous uproar filled the streets, yells, the clicking grunts of the Drilgoes, the screams of the panic-stricken populace. The invaders had arrived, and they were sweeping all before them. No chance of recognition in that darkness. Lucille! Shouting her

name, Jim began to ascend the stairs in leaps of three at a time.

But long before he reached the top he was ascending one by one, with straining limbs and laboring breath. Red slaughter down below, a very inferno of sound; above, that shadowy stairway, still extending almost to the heavens. Step after step, flight beyond flight!

Jim's lungs were bursting, and his heart hammering as if it would break his chest. One flight more! One more! Another! Suddenly he realized that his task was ended. In place of the stairs stood a vast hall, and beyond that another hall, dim in the faint light that filtered through the glass above.

Jim thought he remembered where he was. Beyond that next hall there should be the tongue of flooring, crossing the amphitheatre and joining the platform of the idols. But he stopped suddenly as he emerged, not upon the tongue, but upon still another stairway.

He had gone astray, and out of his bursting lungs a cry of rage and despair went up. For a moment he

stood still. What use to proceed further?

And then, amazingly, there came what might have been a sign from heaven. Down through a small, square opening overhead, no larger than a ventilator, it came ... a glimmer of violet flame!

And Jim hurled himself like a madman against the stairs, and surmounted them with two bounds. There were no more. Instead, Jim found himself looking down into the amphitheatre.

The thick walls had cut off all sound from his ears, save a confused murmur, but now a hideous uproar assailed them. The whole floor of the amphitheatre was a mass of moving shadows, of slayers and slain.

The Drilgoes had broken in and trapped the multitudes that had taken refuge there. Their fearful stone-tipped spears thrust in and out, to the accompaniment of their savage howls and the screams of the dying.

Never has such a shadow-play been seen, perhaps, as

that below, where death stalked in dense darkness, and the slayer did not even see his victim. Only the thrust of spears, the soft, yielding flesh that they encountered, the scream, the wrench of stone from tissue, and the blended howl of triumph and scream of despair.

Yet only for a moment did Jim turn his eyes upon that sight. For he knew where he was now. He had emerged upon the other side of the amphitheatre, upon the platform where he had seen the priests and dignitaries gathered when he was led forward to be sacrificed.

There, in the rear, were the hideous, shadowy gods, looming up out of the darkness, their outstretched arms interlaced. And there upon the platform was the Atom Smasher, a little thread of violet light seeping out of the central tube.

Beside it stood a group of figures, impossible to distinguish in the darkness, but of a sudden Lucille's scream rang out above the din below.



With three leaps Jim was at her side. He saw the girl, Tode, and Parrish, struggling in the grasp of a dozen priests. They were dragging them toward the idols, and Jim understood what that scene portended.

In despair at the irruption of the Drilgoes, the priests were seeking to propitiate their gods by sacrificing the three strangers whom they held responsible for all their woes.

Jim caught Lucille in his arms, shouting her name. She knew him, turned toward him. Then one of the priests, armed with a great stone-headed club—for no metal is permitted within the precincts of the god Cruk—struck at him furiously.

Jim leaped aside, letting the club descend harmlessly upon the floor. He shot out his right with all his strength behind it, catching the priest upon the jaw, and the man crumpled.

Whirling the club around his head, he fought back the fanatics, all the while shouting to Tode to start the Atom Smasher. In such a moment he only

remembered that Tode was a white man, and of his own generation.

He struck down three of the priests; then he was seized around the knees from behind, and fell heavily. The club was wrenched from his hand. In another moment Jim found himself helpless in the grasp of the Atlanteans.

As he stopped struggling for a moment, to gather his strength for a supreme effort, he heard a whir overhead, and saw the arms of the stone gods begin their horrible revolution. The priests had started the machinery. And high above the din below rang out the wild chant of the high priest.

Jim saw him now, a figure poised upon a platform behind the arms, his own arms raised heavenward.

"Aiah! Aiah! Aiah!"

Jim was being dragged forward, with Lucille beside him, old Parrish following, still making a futile struggle for life, while pitiful screeches issued from

his mouth.

Jim saw the revolving arms descend within a foot of his head. One more fight—one more, the last.

Suddenly, with loud yells, a band of Drilgoes leaped forward from the head of the stairs and rushed upon the struggling priests and victims. And, dark as it was, Jim recognized their leader—Cain.

And Cain knew Lucille. As the priests rallied for a desperate resistance, Cain hurled his great body through the air, landing squarely upon the shoulders of the priest nearest the revolving arms, and knocking him flat.

Then the arms caught priest and Drilgo, and the steel hooks dug deep into their flesh. A screech of terror, a howl that reverberated through the amphitheatre, and nothing remained of either but a heap of macerated flesh.

But in that instant Jim had fought free again. He caught Lucille and dragged her back toward the Atom

Smasher.

Tode had already broken from his captors and was working at it frantically.

"Hold on!" screeched old Parrish. "Hold on!"

They had a moment's leeway. The Drilgoes had driven the priests back into the hooks. With awful shrieks the fanatics were yielding up their lives, in the place of their selected victims.

But more Drilgoes were pouring up the stairs. A moment's leeway, and no more, before the savage band would impale the four upon their stone-pointed spears. There was not the slightest chance that they would be able to make their identity known.

"For God's sake hurry!" Jim yelled in Tode's ear.

The wheels were revolving, a stream of violet light, leaping out of the central tunnel, cast a lurid illumination upon the scene.

But it was too late. A score of Drilgoes, with leveled spears, were rushing on the four.

"Hold tight!" screeched Parrish. He thrust his arm into his breast, and pulled out a little lever. Jim recognized it and remembered. It was the instrument of universal death—the uranium release of untold forces of cataclysmic depredation.

"Take that!" screamed the old man, inserting the lever into the secret groove in the Atom Smasher and jerking it in the direction of the priests.

#### **CHAPTER 11: *Tode's Last Gamble***

A roar that seemed to rend the heavens followed. Roar upon roar, as the infinite momentum of the disintegrating uranium struck obstacle after obstacle. The Drilgoes vanished, the amphitheatre melted away, walls and roof.... Overhead were the moon and stars.

And proud Atlantis was sinking into the depths of the sea.... Not as a ship sinks, but piecemeal, her walls and towers crumbling and toppling as a child's sand-

castle crumbles under the attack of the lapping waves. Down they crashed, carrying their freight of black, clinging, human ants, while from the sea's depths a wave, a mile high, rose and battered the fragments to destruction. From the crater of the volcano a huge wave of fire fanned forward, and where fire and water met a cloud of steam rose up.

A boiling chaos in which water and earth and fire were blended, spread over land and sea. And then suddenly it was ended. Where the last island of the Atlantean continent had been, only the ocean was to be seen, placid beneath the stars.

The Atom Smasher was vibrating at tremendous speed. Jim, with one arm round Lucille, faced Tode at the instrument board. Near by sat Parrish, watching him too.

"That took a whole year," said Tode. "That pretty little scene of destruction we've just witnessed. The good old Atom Smasher has been doing some lively stunts, or we'd have been engulfed too. We're not likely to see anything so pretty in history again, unless we go

to watch the destruction of Herculaneum and Pompeii by lava from Vesuvius. But that would be quite tame in comparison with this."

Tode's jeering tone grated on Jim's ears immeasurably.

"I don't think any of us are craving any more experiments, Tode," he said, trying to keep his voice steady. "Suppose you take us back to Peconic Bay. We'll dump the Atom Smasher into the pond, and try to forget that we've had anything except a bad nightmare."

"Don't trust him, Jim," whispered Lucille.

Tode heard. "Thank you," he answered, scowling. "But seriously, Dent, we can't go back with nothing to show for all our trouble. Those fools tried to betray me, and then the Eye went out. Perhaps I have you to thank for that performance? However, the sensible thing is to let bygones be bygones. But we must make a little excursion. How about picking up a little treasure from the hoards of Solomon or Genghis Khan? A few

pounds of precious stones would make a world of difference in our social status when we reach Long Island."

Jim felt a cold fury permeating him. Tode saw his grim look and laughed malignantly.

"Well, Dent, I'm ready to be frank with you," he said. "The game's still in my hands. I want Lucille. I'm willing to take you and Parrish back, provided you agree she shall be mine. I'll have to trust you, but I shall have means of evening up if you play crooked."

"Why don't you ask my girl herself?" piped old Parrish.

"He needn't trouble. He knows the answer!" cried Lucille scornfully.

"There's your answer," said Jim. "Now, what's the alternative?"

"The alternative is, that I have already set the dial to eternity, Dent," grinned Tode. "Eternity in the fifth



dimension. Didn't know I'd worked that out, did you? A pleasant little surprise. No, don't try to move. My hand is on the lever. I have only to press it, and we're there."

Jim stood stock still in horror. Tode's voice rang true. He believed Tode had the power he claimed.

"Yes, the fifth dimension, and eternity," said Tode, "where time and space reel into functionlessness. Don't ask me what it's like there. I've never been there. But my impression of it is that it's a fairly good representation of the place popularly known as hell.

"You fool, Dent," Tode's voice rang out with vicious, snarling emphasis, "I gave you your chance to come in with me. Together we'd have made ourselves masters of Atlantis and brought back her plunder to our Twentieth Century world. You refused because of a girl—a girl, Dent, who loved me long before you came upon the scene."

"That's a lie, Lucius," answered Lucille steadily. "And you can do your worst. There's one factor you haven't

reckoned in your calculations, and that's called God."

"The dark blur on the spectral lines," old Parrish muttered.

Tode laughed uproariously. "Come, make your choice, Dent," he mocked. "It's merely to press this lever. You'll find yourself—well, we won't go into that. I don't know where you'll find yourself. You'll disappear. So shall I. But I'm desperate. I must have Lucille. Choose!" His voice rang out in maniac tones. "Choose, all of you!"

"Lucille has answered you," Jim retorted.

"And how about you, old man?" called Tode to Parrish.

Parrish leaped forward, making a swift movement with his hand. "Go to your own hell, you dev—"

A blinding light, a frantic oscillation of the Atom Smasher, a sense of death, awful and indescribable—and stark unconsciousness rushed over Jim. His last thought was that Lucille's arms were about him, and

that he was holding her. Nothing mattered, therefore, even though they two were plunged into that awful nothingness of the fifth dimension, where neither space nor time recognizably exists. Love could exist there.

## **CHAPTER 12: *Solid Earth***

"He's coming around, Lucille. Thank God for it!"

Jim opened his eyes. For a few moments he looked about him without understanding. Then the outlines of a room etched themselves against the clouded background. And in the foreground Lucille's face. The girl was bending over Jim, one hand soothing his forehead.

"Where am I?" Jim muttered.

"Back on earth, Jim, the good old earth, never again to leave it," answered Lucille, with a catch in her voice. With an effort she composed herself. "You mustn't talk," she said.

"But what place is this?"

"It's Andy Lumm's house. Now rest, and I'll explain everything later."

But the first explanation came from Andy Lumm.

"Well, Mr. Dent, my wife and me sure were glad to be on the spot when you and Miss Parrish got bogged on the edge of the Black Pool," he said. "Mean, treacherous place it is. Thar was a cow got mired thar last month, up to her belly. If us hadn't found her, and dragged her out with ropes, she'd have gone clear under. Granpop Dawes says thar's underground springs around the edge, and that it runs straight down to hell, though that seems sorter far-fetched to me.

"Yessir, and if I hadn't heard WNYC giving Miss Parrish on the list of missing persons, and as having been seen near here, I reckon I'd never have found you. Made me and my wife uneasy, that did. 'Andy,' she says. 'I got an inkling you oughter go to the Vanishing Place and see if she ain't there.' And there I found you two, mired to the waist, and Mr. Parrish

dancing around and fretting, and his clothes burned to cinders.

"It sure seems strange to me, to think Mr. Parrish got away safe after that explosion five years ago, and of his wandering around with loss of memory, till you found him, and brung him back here to restore it, but thar's strange things in the world—yes, sir, thar surely is!"

In the happiness of being back on Earth once more, Jim was content to let further explanations go. The return of Parrish had been duly chronicled in the newspapers, and had provoked a mild interest, but fortunately the public mind was so occupied at the moment with the trial of a night club hostess that, after the first rush of newspaper men, the three were left alone.

Day after day, in the brilliant autumn weather, Jim and Lucille would roam the tinted woods, recharging themselves with the feel of Earth, until the memory of those dread experiences grew dim.

"Well, Jim, I reckon I'd better tell you and get it over," said old Parrish one morning—Parrish, quite his old, jaunty self again. "Tode had got the dials pointing to the fifth dimension—eternity, he called it, though actually I believe it's nothing more than annihilation, a grand smash. Well, he pressed that lever. But something had gone wrong.

"You remember how poor Cain seemed to take great interest in the Atom Smasher. There's no way of telling what had been going on in that brain of his, but it looks to me like he'd known that that lever meant death. It was sealed up in wax, and Tode had got it free on the way out of Atlantis.

"Well—this it what I made out from examining the thing afterward. Cain had been monkeying with the lever. He'd pried loose one of the wires that hooked to the transformer, and short-circuited it, not knowing, of course, just what he was doing. The result was that when Tode pressed that lever, instead of blowing the whole contraption to pieces, he got a couple of billion volts of electricity through his body, combined with a larger amperage than has ever been imagined. It

burned him to a few grease spots. He simply—  
vanished. You don't remember what you did at the  
moment, boy?"

"I don't seem to remember anything," said Jim.

"Well, your response was an automatic one. You  
jumped him. Luckily you were too late, for Tode  
vanished like that!" Old Parrish snapped his fingers.

"But you must have got into the field of magnetic  
force—any way, you were almost electrocuted. Lucille  
and I thought you were dead for hours.

"We laid you down and set a course for home. I used  
those dial numberings Tode had given me. He'd said  
they wouldn't work, but he'd lied. They did work.  
They brought us back to the Vanishing Place.

"We carried you out, and then I saw your eyelid  
twitch. We worked over you with artificial respiration  
till it looked as if there was a chance for you. Then I  
shut off the power and let the waters rush in over the  
Atom Smasher, and swam ashore. And there it lies at  
the bottom of the pool, and may it lie there till the

Judgment Day."

"Tode was a genius," said Jim, "but he never understood that character counts for more than genius."

"Let's think no more about him," said Lucille. She had come up to them, and the two looked at each other and smiled. Love is self-centred; other things it forgets very quickly.

"To-morrow we go back to New York," said Jim. "You think you're able to face the world and take up life again?"

"I think so, Jim," said Lucille.

"You're not remembering him after all?"

"No, Jim. I was thinking of poor Cain. He died for me."

"But that was twelve thousand years ago, my dear, and to-day's to-day," said Jim. "And to-morrow a new life begins for you and me."



He drew her closer to him. No, he would never quite forget, but that was twelve thousand years ago ... and to-morrow was his wedding day.